INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6” x 9” black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
RICE UNIVERSITY

THE MOVE IS ON: AFRICAN AMERICAN PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATICS IN THE SOUTHWEST

by

KAREN LYNELL KOSSIE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

John B. Boles, Professor, Director History

Edward Cox, Associate Professor History

Elias Bongmba, Assistant Professor Religious Studies

Lucille Fultz, Assistant Professor English

Houston, Texas

February, 1998
Copyright © 1998
Karen Lynell Kossie
ABSTRACT

The Move Is On: African American Pentecostal Charismatics in the Southwest

by

Karen Lynell Kossie

This study is an interdisciplinary history the African American Pentecostal-Charismatic (AAPC) movement in the twentieth century. It aims to place the rise of African American Pentecostal-Charismaticism within the context of African American religious history in general and the greater Holiness-Pentecostal movement in particular. It examines the religious traditions (in both theology and practice) out of which the AAPC arose; the specific historical context out of which the AAPC developed; the role of leadership; the social appeal of the AAPC; and the role of gender, class, and race in shaping the growth and character of the movement.

The general field of African American religious history is understudied, with the possible exception of slave Christianity. For the modern period, much of the scholarship has focused on the black church’s relationship to the Civil Rights movement, and the emphasis has been on the mainline black denominations. The focus in the history of Pentecostalism has been on the early twentieth-century origins of the movement, showing its interracial nature, but little has been published on such splinter movements as the Latter Rain phenomenon and the African American Independent Pentecostal-Charismatic (AAIPC) movement. My study will be the first scholarly analysis of this movement and its latter-twentieth-century variations, and the first to place them in geocultural/historical/religious context.
Among the major interpretive points elaborated are the following: (1) contrary to the expectations of early twentieth-century scholars, African American Pentecostalism was hardly a passing phase; (2) the advent of Pentecostalism marked an end to the hegemony of purported mainline denominations in the African American religious experience; (3) unlike mainline Protestantism and Catholicism, Pentecostalism welcomed the participation of women in its leadership; (4) a proliferation of electronic media (radio, television, and the internet) has facilitated a further dissolution of racial, geographical, and denominational barriers; and (5) independent ministers looking toward the twenty-first century have begun to reconsider their initial embrace of complete autonomy and to examine the spiritual and structural ramifications of interdependence and ecumenicalism. Perhaps this is part of the often observed path from sect to denomination that has characterized many earlier religious movements.
DEDICATION

To my father and mother,
Bishop Roy Lee and First Lady Barbara Kossie
Latter Day Revival Center, Houston, TX

~~

Your strength and beauty are inspirational.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"God arranges people, places, and things to accomplish His good purpose"

Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, Jr.

I wish to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities whose financial support permitted consecrating the entire 1997-98 academic year to writing and research. I also wish to recognize the numerous individuals, churches, and organizations that facilitated the completion of my project in myriad ways.

In the prewriting phase of this endeavor, I was inspired by the example of author Arianna Huffington for whom I worked as a research assistant during her book project Picasso: Creator and Destroyer (1988). How I appreciate Huffington's mother for listening to my plans and encouraging me to simply write.

Dr. Linda McNeil (Rice University, Education Department) was also instrumental in the early stages of this undertaking. Not only did she read my first pre-scholarly musings, but suggested that I showed the fifty-page manuscript to Dr. John Boles, William P. Hobby Professor of History at Rice University and editor of the Journal of Southern History. Thanks to Dr. Boles's foresight, sustained enthusiasm, guidance, and editorial gift, including the encouragement of Rice University History Department faculty and staff, the rest is indeed history.

Among those key to my completing this effort were Dr. Richard Tapia, Noah Harding Professor of Computational & Applied Mathematics, who supported my graduate education via a Provost Fellowship (Rice University); Dr. Atieno Odhiambo (African History), who helped me center my research in its Pan-African philosophical/historical/cultural origins; Dr. Edward Cox (Caribbean History), who offered professional and academic guidance throughout my graduate experience; Dr. Elias Bongmba (Religious Studies), who helped me ferret out the theological issues pertinent to
my work and to submit them to critical evaluation; and Dr. Lucille Fultz (English), who shared her knowledge of the African American literary tradition with me even before I initiated graduate studies at Rice University.

I am beholden to Dr. Shirley Moore (English) and Dr. Harvey Cormier (Spanish) for introducing me to the English and History departments at Texas Southern University (TSU). While I entered TSU faculty as an adjunct professor of French via the English & Foreign Language Department, where Dr. Charlene Evans (English) and others encouraged my intellectual pursuits, my career as an academician flourished in the Department of History, Geography, & Economics. I am grateful to Dr. Wolde Michael Akalou (Geography), Dr. Cary Wintz (History), Dr. Merline Pitre (History), Dr. Robert S. Baker (History); Dr. Howard Beeth (History); Dr. Gregory Mattox (African History) and others for providing a rich context for professional and intellectual growth.

I am equally grateful to Professor Farah Griffin of the University of Pennsylvania (English) for being a generous intellectual and a model of excellence for young women in the academy. Griffin’s interdisciplinary study *Who Set You Flowin’* informed my decision to use migration as an organizing principle in my work.

I am also indebted to the following individuals for allowing me to pour through private papers, collections, and photographs: my parents, Bishop Roy Lee and Co-Pastor Barbara Kossie (AAIP); Menthola Townsend, daughter of Pastor Leola Crawford (AAIP); and Missionary/Teacher Earline Allen (COGIC). The information they shared was invaluable.

I thank the host of local clergy and laity who agreed to interviews and/or filled out questionnaires: the late Bishop H.W. Falls (New Zion Temple), the late Mother Josephine Sanders (Senior Church Mother, Latter Day Revival Center), Missionary Bonds (God’s Holy Tabernacle), Bishop J. L. Parker (Bible Way Church of Holiness), Pastor Dorothy Summersville (AAIP), Bishop H.M. Bolden (Rock of Salvation Holiness Church), Elder Alfred M. and Guilda Garrett, Pastor Ezzie Mae Williams (Miracle
Deliverance Holiness Church), Pastor Michael P. Williams (Joy Tabernacle, Pastor Arline Moore (God's Will Holiness Church), Pastor Prentice Hobbs (New Life Tabernacle), Carlos Pierrott (Harvest Time); Pastor Worthy Jennings (Miracle House of Prayer # 1), Kimberly Kossie (KSBJ 89.3-FM), Corliss A. Rabb (KYOK AM-1590), Darryl Martin (KWWJ AM-1360), Sister Ormie Martin, Associate Pastor James Strolger (Woodard's Cathedral COGIC and State Secretary, COGIC, TX), Pastor Pinkston Bell (Buck Street Memorial COGIC), Sister Mozelle Satcherwhite (Latter Day Revival Center), Sister Glenda Smith (Latter Day Revival Center), Sister Johnny Taylor (Latter Day Revival Center), Viki Duncan (Latter Day Revival Center), Sister Beaunie Pritchett (Latter Day Revival Center).

In other parts of Texas, the following individuals and entities agreed to take part in the project: Johnnie Mae Driver (C.C. Driver Revivals); Marvin T. Boyd (Faith Impact Ministries, Baytown Texas); Pastor Eddie B. Leadon (Miracle House of Prayer # 2, Freeport, TX); Lorenzo Coleman (Miracle House of Prayer # 3); and New Light Ministries (Houston, TX).

I also appreciate the congenial assistance received from individuals and ministries outside the state of Texas: Bette Northington-Griffin, office manager (Church of God in Christ Headquarters, Memphis, TN); Emma J. Clark, founder and curator of the Mattie McGlothen museum (Richmond, CA); Jacquelyn McCullough Ministries (Buffalo, NY); and Higher Dimensions Ministries, Tulsa Oklahoma.

I offer very special commendations to the staffs at the following libraries, organizations, and churches made pertinent manuscripts and collections available: Fondren Library (Rice University), the Hartman Collection (Texas Southern University); the University of Houston; The Houston Public Library System (The Texas Room, Scenic Woods, Montrose Branches); and Simmie Driver, church administrator (Latter Day Revival Center, Houston, TX).
Owing to those here acknowledged, an area of study that I deeply appreciate has become a veritable field of dreams. My sincere hope is that the ensuing pages begin to suggest the depth of my gratitude.
Table of Contents

Volume I

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Preface

Introduction

Intellectuals, African American Pentecostal-Charismatics, and the Story Untold

Chapter 1

The Southwest: A Place of Possibility

Chapter 2

Merging People and Places: Pre-Azusa Pioneers in the Southwest

Chapter 3

Charles Mason and Early Southwestern Pioneers

Chapter 4

“Behold, I Do a New Thing”: The Emergence of African American Independent Pentecostals (AAIPs)

Chapter 5

“Higher, Lord!”: Saints in Praise

Chapter 6

New Migrations: The Making of a Pentecostal Couple

Chapter 7

The 1960s: Let the Holy Ghost Lead You

Chapter 8

The 1970s: Saints in Transition

Chapter 9

AAIPCs of the 1980s: The Best and Worst of Times

Chapter 10

The 1990s: The Secularization of a Spiritual Church

Chapter 11

Looking Forward to a New Millennium

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendices
“Without history, one cannot have a sense of nation.”

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations
April 23, 1998
Baker Institute, Rice University
PREFACE

Thriving on the tension between migration and mooring, this work was engendered by a nostalgic moment, the kind unique to those who travel away from home just long enough to relish in warm memories of how things use to be. Just long enough to imagine what life might be, or might have become, if this or that were changed, reversed, or sustained.

Like so many young African Americans of my generation, commissioned by our teachers to achieve the integrationist ideals of the post-civil rights era, as I attempted to embrace wholly “Other” perspectives of the world in the name of progress and modernity, I felt unnecessarily distanced from the people whose nurturing had equipped me to function in the myriad worlds beyond the Southwestern one that had given me life. Realizing that I was about to let go of cultural treasures whose loss I would soon regret, I made an about-face, changed my academic orientation and vowed to grow where I had been planted—in Houston, TX, in the Fifth Ward, on the organ seat in my father’s inner-city Pentecostal church. There my course would be determined. There my way would be made.

As I directed the choir and provided the musical accompaniment for my father’s spirited messages, I began to notice a recurring theme in his pre- and post-sermon affirmations. “God is telling his story,” he would say to his small, but determined, congregation, one whose members migrated in and out of the area for one reason or another. If God were indeed the all-knowing, all-powerful, pervasive force that the congregation believed him to be, to prove himself in the most unlikely places, in troubled neighborhoods like the one near our church, was exactly the kind of drama he liked. The more I watched our story’s unfolding and those of other African American Pentecostal-Charismatics in the Southwest and abroad, the more I felt compelled to write.
When I initiated the prewriting phase of this project, however, I discovered that very few scholars had given attention to the black Pentecostal case and that none had examined Pentecostalism among African Americans within the geographical context of the movement's early flourishing. More writers than not concentrated on the alleged spiritual exoticism of black Pentecostals as opposed to the people themselves. Their tendency was to highlight Pentecostal calisthenics: women and men dancing down the aisles of the church, children playing tambourines and clapping their hands in spirited polyrhythmic abandon, and people possessed by the spirit either collapsing under the power or taking victory laps around a rural wood-framed church. Modernist scholars deemed 'feeling the spirit' too subjective a cause and, therefore, invalidated by its lack of objectivity.

The critique of black Pentecostal worship modalities commenced long before dynamic worship among blacks of the Diaspora was "pentecostalized." From their earliest dealings with transplanted Africans, Westerners tended to associate fervent worship with cultural deprivation, supposed residue of the 'Dark Continent.' Continuing the trend of their forefathers, white missionaries in charge of Spelman College in the early twentieth century were quite pleased when their well-trained, primarily light-skinned, girls parted forever, they thought, with the emotional religious outbursts of their 'heathen' African ancestors. Turning a familiar African-American folk saying on its head, the missionaries intrinsically suggested that "the blacker and more expressive the berry, the more intellectually obtuse."1 In their opinion, spirited worship and upward social mobility were irreconcilable notions.

The heavy emphasis on "movement" as it relates to Pentecostal liturgy dwarfed the significance of "movement" as purposeful migration, an element key to appreciating the black Pentecostal example. Privileging "movement" as "migration," not as "religious fervor," allows exploring the subjects within the broader context of the African American experience, one familiar with the structural ramifications of relocation and change.
Because the African American metanarrative has been confined in many studies to a northern-southern binary for political, economic, geo-cultural, and historical reasons dating back to the Mayflower and to slaved ships sailing the Middle Passage, the migration of African Americans into the Southwest has largely been ignored. I became aware of the need to examine black southwestward migration upon noting that the only movement privileged in much of the historical literature was bound northward for the “Promised Land.” During a conference in Tenerife, Spain (1995), sponsored by Harvard University’s DuBois Institute and the Collegium on African American Research (CAAR), an African American scholar and poet further confirmed my findings when she referred to black “Northerners” as those who had “sense” enough to leave the South. Thus “the south” joined hands with “spirited movement” in a dismal descent into maelstrom.

An interpretative rescue effort of sorts, my study of African American Pentecostals of the Southwest provides an opportunity not only to explore the region out of which modern American Pentecostalism grew, but to better understand and appreciate people whose influence permeates the black experience despite the forced and self-imposed aspects of their exilic undertaking.

Research suggests that from 1906 to the present, African American Pentecostals participated in at least five distinct migratory experiences. The first was a spiritual migration (1907-present) to Pentecostalism from Methodist and Baptist traditions. The dual motivation as expressed by early Pentecostal pioneers—including Missionary/Evangelist Lucy Farrow; William J. Seymour, catalyst for the historic Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, 1906; and Charles Harrison Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ (the largest African American Pentecostal organization in the world) in 1907—was both to preserve the spirited worship style of the African American slaves and to find an inclusive/responsive expression of divinity in the earth. Early COGIC church mothers added racial uplift to the Pentecostal mission.
From the Emancipation to the New Deal, physical migration predominated among them. Like many African Americans at the turn of the century, black Pentecostals sought the employment and educational opportunities that urbanity promised to deliver. While the greatest percentage of African Americans joined the northbound exodus, a considerable number attempted to establish themselves in the Southwest, an effort that residual racism often challenged with fury.

During the next two decades (1940s-1960s), the quest for new politico-cultural vistas gained the foreground. As black Pentecostals became more democratized so did their concept of religion. A growing number of ministers parted with established Pentecostal politics, established independent churches, and joined loose fellowships free of strict hierarchy. Meanwhile, their parishioners became increasingly selective and resistant to the concept of “lifetime” and/or “generational” membership.

The fourth migration (1970s-1980s), socioeconomic in nature, was linked to the third. Given their American democratic-capitalistic context, the version of Christianity that they espoused became service-oriented. Forwarding the modernist idea of salvation through economic progress, the preacher/businessman challenged the long-standing hegemony of the pastor/spiritual leader/advisor. The quest for the economic accoutrements of success and the stress on individualism encouraged not only the death of memory, but nurtured a socio-spiritual alienation quite foreign to the African American Southwesterner’s African-based concepts of community and culture.

Economic recession, the resurgence of racism, and cultural alienation catalyzed the fifth movement (1980s-1990s), one that is best described as a cultural return. Like African Americans throughout the country, black Pentecostals expressed renewed intellectual and spiritual appreciation for the cultural bridges that had “crossed them over.” While their approach to economics remained tightly wedded to capitalism, an increasing number favored securing government funds to improve the holistic vitality of the communities they served.
The theme of migration essentially allows seeing the interconnected spiritual, geographical, political, and socio-economic quests for identity, place, and valuation that have framed the twentieth-century experience of African American Pentecostals. Given the complex factors that continue to shaped the African-American experience as we approach the millennium (race, class, gender, geography, and generation), it is certain that their move—like those of other African Americans—will always be on.

1The original folk phrase is “The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.”
Volume I

The Move Is On: 
African American Pentecostal-Charismatics in the Southwest

by

Karen Lynell Kossie
Introduction: Intellectuals, African American Pentecostal Charismatics, and the Story Untold

The story of African American Pentecostals is one of the most intriguing in American religious history. Engaging familiar American themes such as "freedom of expression," "independence," and "democracy," it possesses all the necessary ingredients for a national epic of triumph over adversity. Yet the narrative of black Pentecostals' arduous search for a benevolent God who appreciated their spirited praises has eluded both the scholar and subjects in question. This is particularly true of the dual account of African American Independent Pentecostals (AAIP) of the late 1940s and their Pentecostal-Charismatic offspring (AAIPC) of the late 1960s to the present. The available evidence suggests that five interrelated factors—historically determined—served to mute the collective voice of an otherwise resonant people.

First and foremost, early-to-mid-twentieth century black intellectuals (largely western in philosophical orientation) were in an anti-religious mood during the wake of Pentecostalism. Most could see no redeeming value in a religious movement whose adherents' predilection for emotional abandon clashed with the early-twentieth-century call for empiricism and modernity. Second, scholars of religion employed functionalist approaches that made the black Pentecostal's spiritual as opposed to political approach to the African American experience difficult if not impossible to appreciate, especially given that accounts of Pentecostal pathology and social dysfunction dominated the pertinent discourse. Third, while simultaneously rejecting many of the theological tenets of Pentecostalism, members of African American mainline denominations often co-opted Pentecostal modes of worship without acknowledging their borrowings. Fourth, many of the generally northern-based studies on Black Pentecostalism reflected a clear regional bias
due to the movement’s "southern" origins. Finally, many within the Pentecostal movement appeared to maintain a dual a-historical/anti-intellectual posture throughout the early years of the African-American Pentecostal experience. Though Pentecostals spoke often of "evidence," they left very little sustained proof of their encounters with the mundane or the divine. They felt it but rarely explained it to the satisfaction of their detractors. The ineffability of their experience left ample room, then, for conjecture among those who had not gotten it. This experiential segregation resulted in a profound historical silencing that merits retraicing.

As African American intellectuals assumed their tripartite agenda to solve America's Negro Problem, challenge the international color line, and find a place for the descendants of ex-slaves in an increasingly technical world, the relationship between African American intellectuals, religion, and the church was a bittersweet one at best. In its most positive light, the church was "the birthplace of Negro schools and of all agencies which seek to promote the intelligence of the masses," as W.E.B. Du Bois noted in 1899, and black religion was a cultural icon and treasure. At its worst, the church constituted a hideout for jack-leg preachers and charlatans whose proffered religion remained an escapist opiate for the ignorant Negro masses. Yet as scholars sought to identify the cultural, social, and

---

1 That black Pentecostals faced discrimination among southwestern whites in the post-Reconstruction era is perhaps a given. It should be noted however that many of the whites who embraced the Pentecostal movement at the outset obtained ministerial license from the Church of God in Christ. I.C. Clemmons argues that between the years 1909 and 1914, there were as many white Churches of God in Christ as there were black, "all carrying Mason's incorporation and credentials. Apparently, Mason was the only early Pentecostal convert in attendance at Azusa "who came from a legally incorporated church body and who could thus ordain persons whose status as clergymen was recognized by civil authorities." I.C. Clemmons, "Mason, Charles Harrison (1866-1961)", in Stanley M. Burgess and Garry B. McGee, eds., Dictionary of Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988) 587.

2 The presence of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

3 One popular Pentecostal song relates the difficulty that Pentecostals had describing their experience:
   I've got it! I've got it!
   I've got it! I've got it.
   Something 'bout the Holy Ghost. I can't explain it but I've got it!

intellectual contributions of African Americans in an effort to position their story within the American cultural rubric of acceptability, black religion—one of the few areas that had been left almost solely to the slaves themselves—emerged as the primary candidate for analysis. Realizing that freedom, American style, demanded proof of self-determinism and a sense of accomplishment, Du Bois underscored the value of African American religious culture in *A Sociology of the Negro Church* (1906) and later encouraged black writers to preserve what they could of it in their writings. Countering the fictive, Christian Negro-Victorians who filled the pages of early twentieth-century African American literature, the folk Negro preacher and his call-response sermons were among the first authentic artifacts to be commemorated.

James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones* and *The Creation* constituted celebratory poetic responses to DuBois's request. As black intellectuals evaluated the African American's socio-political plight in the United States and that of blacks in other parts of the world, however, many began to reason that disproportionate attention to religion among blacks led to economic, intellectual, and socio-political passivity, despite the value of religion as a cultural artifact or moral construct. Thus even while Du Bois acknowledged the church historically as the "major institution created, sustained, and controlled by black people themselves" and "the most visible and salient cultural product of black people in the United States," he and other black intellectuals of either assimilationist, marginalist, or humanist philosophical bents felt that excessive religiosity kept African Americans and Africans alike from embracing the West's newfound faith in man and/or science.⁵

⁵In *Prophesy Deliverance*, Cornel West employs the terms "exceptionalist," "assimilationist," "marginalist," and "humanist" to describe the four basic African-American intellectual responses to modern racism. The following brief definitions provided by West are more thoroughly elaborated in the his text:

(1) "The Afro-American exceptionalist tradition lauds the uniqueness of Afro-American culture and personality." (2) "The Afro-American assimilationist tradition considers Afro-American culture and personality to be pathological." (3) "The Afro-American marginalist tradition
The growing rift between scholars and the clergy and the seemingly intractable position that some African American preachers held with regards to science is better understood when contemporary intellectual trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are recapitulated. The division was symptomatic of a greater ideological revolution that had been gaining momentum throughout the West since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Having witnessed untold violence and persecution in the name of Christianity, European intellectuals were not completely averse to Voltaire’s mission to destroy within two days what it took twelve apostles fifty years to accomplish; his disposition was a clear harbinger of a new anti-Christian intellectual discourse.\textsuperscript{6} However, the American battle with scepticism did not occur on a grand scale until some 150 years later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at which time the Christian universe sustained painful attacks on all fronts. In the view of Christians black and white, Western thinkers seemed to have transformed themselves into enemies of the cross despite the fact that the founders’ faith in the cross had led to the establishment of most of the prestigious institutions from which scholars announced Christianity’s demise, Harvard and the Sorbonne included. Theologians and ministers generally responded in one of three ways; they either embraced current scientific trends wholly, as did Lyman Abbott in The Theology of an Evolutionist (1897);\textsuperscript{7} partially, as did Washington Gladden in The Tools of Man (1893);\textsuperscript{8} or they rejected them altogether. Those who espoused literalist interpretations of the Bible assumed the most defensive postures against Darwinian natural selection, Nietzschean philosophy, and later Sartrean existentialism which respectively


\textsuperscript{6} Voltaire, \textit{Candide}. (1759) English. (New York: Modern Library, 1918)

\textsuperscript{7} Lyman Abbott, \textit{The Theology of an Evolutionist}. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1897).

discredited the Biblical account of creation, challenged the existence of God, and dismissed hell as "others"—*les autres*.\(^9\) Despite Carl Jung's attempt to assuage the fears that many clergymen harbored toward his revolutionary field by reminding them of the psychiatrist's and the minister's shared concern for the "soul" or psyche,\(^10\) many ministers maintained their conservative positions. While to attack the hypocritical, exploitative, and abusive aspects of religious institutions was not without merit, to reject a savior whom many American Christians felt they knew personally was not only insulting but simply incomprehensible to many of the faithful. What could have been the scholars' quarrel with Christ?

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Mark A. Noll contends that an anti-religious mood within the academy occurred between 1865 and 1900 with the restructuring of higher education. During this period evangelicals, whom he claims "had dominated college life to that time," were "utterly displaced as the intellectual arbiters of the nation."\(^11\) The evangelical tradition that Jonathan Edwards set into motion and John Wesley and others continued had been effectively derailed. The expansion of graduate programs coupled with a dramatic rise in the number of students attending college plunged many young American minds into an ideological complex full of titillating possibilities. Thus while students benefited overall from the proliferation of course offerings, the newfound academic freedom and faith in secular humanism spelled disaster for the evangelicals' biblical worldview.

Philip Wentworth's testimonial, "What College Did to My Religion," published in the June 1932 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, exemplifies the impact that such exposure

---


had on Christian students' home-grown faith. Wentworth argued that although he entered Harvard in 1924 at age eighteen "comfortably adjusted to the Christian university in which all things work together for good of them that love God" and "thoroughly at home in a universe which revolved about the central figure of an omnipotent Deity," he graduated an agnostic. He claimed that "In the course of time the impact of new knowledge, and especially knowledge of science and the scientific method, wrought great havoc with [his] original ideas. All things, it seems, were subject to laws of nature. This concept supplied [his] mind with a wholly new pattern into which [his] religious beliefs refused to fit. In such an orderly university there seemed to be no place for a wonder-working God. He would be an outlaw, unthinkable and impossible. The bottom dropped out of [his] world, and [he] wrestled with [himself] in a futile attempt to patch it up."\(^{12}\)

The incommensurability of faith and science to which Wentworth alludes also found expression among young African American intellectuals who espoused either assimilationist, marginalist, or humanist stances.\(^{13}\) However, different from Wentworth's rationality vs. faith dichotomy, black scholars, particularly those of a humanist bent, tended to emphasized faith in self vs. faith in God. In 1929, for example, Eugene Gordon argued against Christianity as the religion of choice for 'Aframericans.' An "excellent opiate, in the hands of the masters,"\(^{14}\) Christianity, Gordon believed, "induce[d] sluggish content" and thereby made slaves less likely to stage rebellion. Suggesting that the Southern Negro's religiosity somehow contributed to his continued social dilemma, Gordon posited that "So long as the Negro remains a devout Christian he will remain at least


\(^{13}\) "Exceptionalist" thinkers as outlined by Cornel West *in Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (1982) do not comfortably fit this category given their laudatory evaluation of the African American experience.

psychologically a slave." Believing Christianity to be in direct opposition to human industry, Gordon further argued that "Christianity makes the Negro meek when he should be proud. It makes him humble when he should be arrogant. It teaches him to turn the other cheek when he should retaliate in kind. It lays emphasis upon future life to the neglect and detriment of present life in a hard-fisted, uncompromising, cunning, and militant world."\textsuperscript{15} Gordon, moreover, proposed "that the existing religions of the world—Judaism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity—be studied by a commission designated for that purpose, and that the principles of each of the aforementioned religions which best suited the Aframerican's situation be combined to form a new religion."\textsuperscript{16} Illustrating how his plan for religious restructuring would work, Gordon asserted:

From Islam take the spirit of militancy which the Southern Negroes, especially need; from Confucianism the abolution of fear of the hereafter and renunciation of the idea of heaven; from Judaism the righteousness of retaliation; and so on.\textsuperscript{17}

The frustration that Gordon expressed may have stemmed from the fact that he and other early-twentieth-century black intellectuals had more than a difficult time establishing presence in the black church and its loyal black followers. In \textit{American Minority Peoples} (1932) Donald Young affirmed:

There are Negro leaders who regret the hold of the Christian church on the American colored population. There is evidence that their task of leadership is made difficult by the colored churches, if their task is to bring better times to their people on earth...The emotional outlet provided by services and revivals and the certainty of salvation through the rebirth of conversion make a colored following hard to hold to a non-religious organization or program...No matter which way the intellectual Negro leader turns, he is

\textsuperscript{15} Gordon. 579. \\
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.} \\
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
blocked by the church, for the church is not in sympathy with intellectual programs and has the strength of being of, not for, the people.¹⁸

Young’s assessment is a cogent one indeed. For he realized that intellectuals who focused on the black church’s alleged hyperspirituality overlooked an important secular truth. The occasional “pew-jump” notwithstanding,¹⁹ the black church provided followers with an unprecedented opportunity for democratic participation. Pastors did not tell members what to do but negotiated with them to determine the proper course of action in matters both secular and spiritual.

Members of the Harlem litterati responded to this socio-cultural deadlock between intellectuals and the church in myriad ways. Jamaican-born Claude McKay²⁰ challenged the dilemma by presenting a parody of organized religion and folk practices alike in Banana Bottom (1933), set in Jamaica. McKay suggests that religion was often a breeding ground for mindless dependency and exploitation by highlighting the superficial piety of Bita Plant’s English guardian, missionary Priscilla Craig; the blatant hypocrisy of Herald Newton, the reverend-to-be who “suddenly turned crazy and defiled himself with a nannie goat,”²¹ and the instability of Wumba, the expensive²² Obeahman who eventually went “quite mad.”²³ McKay does express appreciation for the Free Church, however, for in worship style and form it represents a fusion of African and Christian religious practices that the people had created for themselves.

---

¹⁸ Donald Young, American Minority Peoples (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932) 534—35.
¹⁹ The expression “to jump a pew” is often used to capture the exuberant form of worship that is common in some black churches, particularly those of the Pentecostal movement.
²⁰ McKay immigrated to the United States from Jamaica in 1912. He eventually became a revolutionary voice during the Harlem Renaissance. After spending twelve years in Europe as an American expatriate, he returned to the United States and died in Chicago in 1948.
²¹ Claude McKay, Banana Bottom (New York: Harper and Row, 1933), 175.
²² Ibid., 159.
²³ Ibid., 150.
With confident resolve, Zora Neale Hurston, notwithstanding her anthropological appreciation for black spirituality evidenced in *The Sanctified Church* (1935), admits questioning the existence of God early in life despite having “tumbled right out of the Missionary Baptist Church” when she was born. As vocalizing such doubts was hardly acceptable, she repressed her thoughts that lay dormant until she entered college; “When [she] studied both history and philosophy, the struggle began again.” Hurston finally came to attribute religion and prayer to weakness, desperation, and the inability to act.

People need religion because the great masses fear life and its consequences... Feeling a weakn ... is a creature of their own minds. Strong, self-determined men are notorious for their lack of reverence.

Holding that prayer “is for those who need it” yet not denying the need of the consolation it affords them, she argued that “[p]rayer seem[ed] to [her] a cry of weakness, and an attempt to avoid, by trickery the rules of the game as layed [sic] down.” Having “made peace with the universe” and “bow[ed] to its laws,” she refused to admit weakness and wholeheartedly accepted her existential challenge to be.

Hurstonian humanism finds full expression years later in Paule Marshall’s *Brown Girl Brown Stones* (1959), in which both the protagonist, Selina, and her mother, Silla, refuse to let the church govern their lives. Strong, self-determined females, each possesses

---


29 *Ibid*.

30 *Ibid*.

the kind of irreverence that Hurston considers prerequisite to greatness. While commemorating those who take charge of their existence through Selina’s self-reliant example, Marshall sends a powerful warning to those who do not via the tragic story of the father, Deighton. Unable to adjust to the exigencies of Harlem’s aggressive Barbadian community, Deighton turns to religion for succor, strength, and a sense of belonging. Knowing that Deighton is bereft of financial accomplishments and social prestige, those who consider themselves to be successful treat Deighton like an outcast. Consequently, his feelings of alienation and abandonment left him vulnerable to religious brainwashing; near the brink of insanity, Deighton sought refuge in the Father Peace Movement, Marshall’s fictive recreation of Father Divine’s popular and flamboyant religious movement in Harlem during the 1930s.

In their different ways, Marshall, McKay, Hurston, Young, and Gordon contested the myth that blacks were somehow natural Christians as suggested by Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous Negro character in Uncle Tom’s Cabin and highlighted the pitfalls of religiosity devoid of personal responsibility. They and other young educated blacks of the early-to-mid twentieth century found the endless patience, humility, and gentleness suggested by unambitious Uncle Tom and Mammy stereotypes to be anachronistic. Harvard-educated Alain Locke expressed as much in his work aptly entitled The New Negro when he declared the Old Negro of the self-effacing Uncle Tom tradition a myth of the past. Locke’s New Negro had achieved “something like a spiritual emancipation” in that he had outgrown the need for the traditional sociologist, philanthropist, and the race-leader of the early twentieth century, all of whom, despite their good will, generally

---

presented the Negro as "the sick man of American Democracy." 34 The New Negro's value, however, was neither defined by, nor limited to, inherent religiosity but rather by his intellectual ability and propensity for self-improvement. Having "ardently hoped for and peculiarly trusted" religion, freedom, education, and money, although the New Negro still believed in them, his trust was not blind; he did not expect them to "solve his life problem." 35

As McKay's example suggested earlier, many intellectuals believed that excessive religiosity was detrimental not only to African Americans but to blacks in other parts of the world as well. When marginalist Richard Wright visited Accra, Ghana, in 1957, he concluded that Africans suffered from an acute preoccupation with religion. As Wright pondered the ability of "a mediocre lot" of white men and women "to administer the destinies of millions of blacks," he could only conclude that religion was partly to blame. 36

Echoing other members of the early-to-mid-twentieth-century intelligentsia, he deplored the seemingly docile state that religion inculcated in African natives. As with African Americans, religion made the Africans unduly patient and consequently lessened the likelihood of their rising to defy British colonial rule. In a conversation with a Ghanaian teenage boy who served as his escort, Wright further complained that missionaries supported the status quo by encouraging natives to wait endlessly for social change. Although Wright was impressed by Kwame Nkrumah's fusion of European political activism and African religious fervor, he cautioned against reliance on emotionalism and irrationalism. For had not history revealed religion to be powerless in the face of Western empirical machinations? Had not even an African proverb taught that when the white man

34 Ibid. 519.
35 Ibid.
entered Africa he gave the native the Bible and taught him "the golden rule," but took for himself the gold, the land, and the rule?

James Baldwin, an assimilationist and preacher's son, admitted his problems with religion also, especially organized religion that, in the West, had a clear history of sanctioning the status quo. Along with his personal background, Baldwin's response to religion was largely informed by a growing knowledge of the atrocities committed in Asia, Africa, and the Philippines at the hands of nations that were purportedly Christian. Having initially highlighted the inability of religiosity to protect African Americans from the unpredictable ravages of racism in his fiction work Go Tell It On The Mountain (1952), where he highlights internal turmoil within a dysfunctional black Pentecostal family, Baldwin suggested in The Fire Next Time (1962) that racial injustice in America virtually nullified Western claims to rationality and that the African American's problems were too complex for faith or logic to solve:

[M]any of my friends fled into the service, all to be changed there, and rarely for the better, many to be ruined, and many to die. Others fled to other states and cities—that is, to other ghettos. Some went on wine or whiskey or the needle, and are still on it. And others, like me, fled into the church. For the wages of sin were visible everywhere, in every wine-stained and urine splashed hallway, in every clanging ambulance bell, in every scar on the faces of the pimps and their whores, in every helpless, newborn baby being brought into this danger...Crime became real, for example—for the first time—not as a possibility but the possibility. One would never defeat one's circumstances by working and saving one's pennies; one would never, by working acquire that many pennies, and besides, the social treatment accorded even the most successful Negroes proved that one needed, in order to be free, something more than a bank account.

Evincing a move beyond his initial assimilationist stance, Baldwin concluded that "[n]either civilized reason nor Christian love would cause any of those people to treat you [Blacks] as they presumably wanted to be treated; only the fear of [Blacks'] power to retaliate would cause them to do that, or to seem to do it, which was (and is) good
While Baldwin was not ready to embrace the racial separatism and militant stance forwarded by the Nation of Islam, he believed strongly that "the intransigence and ignorance of the white world might make...vengeance inevitable." The aggression of which he spoke did not "really depend on" and could not "really be executed by, any person or organization" and could not be "prevented by any police force or army." For it was a "historic vengeance, based on the law that we recognize when we say, "Whatever goes up must come down." Advocating interracial cooperation, Baldwin warned that if whites and blacks did not unite "to end the racial nightmare," violence was inevitable—"No more water, the fire next time!"

While certain aspects of Baldwin's critiques and those of other black intellectuals raised legitimate concerns, Baldwin, his predecessors, and contemporaries—with only traditional historical methods in use and the Civil Rights and Black Power movements ensconced in the future—were not historically positioned to fully appreciate the fact that black Christians throughout the New World had always distinguished Christ the liberator from Christ the conqueror-capitalist of Western civilization; those blacks who could not, either changed religions or rejected religion altogether. Nonetheless, as scholars of the post-Civil Rights era began to employ new methods and expand the body of admissible historical evidence, as did Albert Raboteau in Slave Religion, John Boles in Black

39 *Ibid*.
Southerners, and Eugene Genovese in *Flight and Rebellion*, the histories of God-conscious black revolutionaries emerged to prove that religion had indeed spurred people of African descent to liberative action: Toussaint L’Ouverture’s rebellion in Haiti, Gabriel Prosser’s and Denmark Vessey’s Christian-based revolts in the continental United States, as well as the Myalist rebellion of Akan slaves in the British Caribbean all constitute examples in which leaders used religion to energize and organize revolutions. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth’s Christian-informed liberationist efforts were equally as demonstrative. Their collective actions proved that despite images of a blond, blue-eyed Jesus affixed to Western church walls, the Son of God that blacks internalized was not a white supremacist of Darwinian persuasion.

As Donald G. Mathews argued, blacks well before the twentieth century possessed Christianity “as their own when white believers excluded them from the promise of freedom and equal companionship in Christ.” Where political freedom was legally denied or justice obfuscated by vague interpretations, religious freedom proved to be a powerful substitute by providing an opportunity for African Americans to exercise leadership and organizational skills, and most importantly, as James Cone noted, to “define and structure the meaning of blackness.” Further arguing that slaves had reconfigured Christianity, Peter J. Paris contended that “the religious spirit that the slaves nurtured and promoted in various secret assemblies was undoubtedly subversive if, for no other reason than the fact that the slaves were engaged in constructing a means of helping themselves by coopting the religion of the slaveowners.” Thus while E. Brooks Holfeld’s one hundred leading

---

42 Peter Wood, *Black Majority*.
white urban gentlemen theologians cast aside emotionalism as early as 1795 in favor of a rational theology,\textsuperscript{47} black pastors a century later preached a gospel that helped congregants combat the racism that mocked Western claims of rationality and objectivity. Moreover, as their white counterparts promoted the myth of the loyal slave as a “vindication for slavery” and proof that slavery had “provided essential order, discipline and morality in Negro life,”\textsuperscript{48} members of the black clergy emphasized the hypocrisy of racialist interpretations of the Bible and highlighted the liberationist power of the gospel.

The commitment to Christian-based black liberation and to the overall quest for identity and place within the black religious community expressed itself in myriad ways in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The manner in which black Christians meshed the spiritual with the secular depended largely on their denomination’s or individual church’s interpretation of the purpose of Christianity in the earth. African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Bishop Henry McNeil Turner was among the first black ministers to formally introduce the African American’s redemptionist version of Christ in the nineteenth century. Many of his contemporary black Methodist and Baptist pastors stood at the helm of political protests for equality as well. Eric Foner argued that as members of the Ku Klux Klan declared themselves protectors of white supremacy in 1867, across the black belt ministers became increasingly politicized and mounted counter efforts to preserve their own African American communities. Purportedly every AME minister in Georgia was engaged in Republican organizing, and political materials were read aloud at “churches, societies, leagues, clubs, balls, picnics, and all other gatherings.”\textsuperscript{49} Ministers,


like those around them, struggled to demand and interpret a newfound freedom that legislative contradictions at local, state, and national levels had problematized. Meanwhile, Black Texans focused their attention on procuring educational, political, and social opportunities via the Freedmen’s Bureau and the black clergy and church. Jack Yates, born in Glouster County, Virginia, in 1828 to Robert and Rachel Yates, played a major role in helping secure civil rights for blacks in Houston before the turn of the century. Having already learned along with other blacks who migrated to Texas during this period that self-reliance was the surest route to success, Yate’s Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, founded by freed slaves, sought to improve the educational, social, and economic standing of black Houstonians.\textsuperscript{50}

The progressive attitude of black ministers as well as black Texans is further suggested through the actions of a certain group of northern black ministers from Washington. In 1910 they protested the social plight of African Americans in Texas through a letter to President William Howard Taft decrying violence against blacks in the Lone Star state:

\begin{quote}
Within a month approximately a hundred citizens have suffered death or persecution in a community of the State of Texas. They have been lynched, murdered, burned and persecuted, the State apparently powerless to help them. This sad condition of racial strife, ever present like a smothering volcano ready to emit the lava of race hatred, makes it imperative for us as Colored Ministers, servants of the public and friends of justice, to make this impassioned protest.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Their letter confirms that the African American’s version of Christianity permitted progress according to the Western tradition, but intimidation was being used to discourage blacks from achieving their goals:

\textsuperscript{50} Cary Wintz, \textit{Black Houston} (Houston: Houston Center for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1982), 10.
We have bought land, built homes and established Churches, but those states as desire to do so go on disfranchising us, lynching our men on frivolous charges and unproved allegations, and widening the chasm which race differentiation has made broad enough.\(^{52}\)

Further highlighting that blacks had internalized a dynamic Christianity, John Dittmer affirmed that during the Progressive Era the black church served as a springboard for education in the African American community.\(^{53}\) Because many blacks in the South were excluded from public schools at the turn of the century, black churches with the assistance of white philanthropists established many of the first post-bellum black educational institutions. The Hampton Institute and Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Normal Institute exemplify this trend.\(^{54}\) In 1913, for example, seventy-eight private schools in Georgia enrolled over 11,500 black students. Of these, about 9,300 attended elementary schools, 2100 went to secondary schools, and 150 enrolled in six black colleges. Private schools often included both elementary and secondary programs. While usually white church denominations operated a number of these institutions in the North, in the South, the same were founded, staffed, and administered by blacks.

Although black Christian socio-political agency continued throughout the early twentieth century, the advent of Marcus Garvey (a politician of West Indian descent who invoked strong religious symbolism) signaled a bold two-fold shift in the general attitude toward African American religiosity, one that would eventually attract the attention of black scholars. Rather than fighting blacks’ religious predisposition as did most intellectuals, Garvey used the African American religious personality to enhance his socio-political agenda. Equally as essential, Garvey introduced an unprecedented verbal reinterpretation of

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 17.
\(^{54}\) Rabinowitz, 145—46.
medieval artists' depiction of Christ. Garvey's Saviour was no longer a compassionate white Christ who supported social and spiritual egalitarianism alone; according to Garvey's Afrocentric cosmology, Jesus was black. "Ethiopia" needed him to be. As African American psychologists would later affirm in the 1980s during their annual meeting, Garvey's re-articulation of Christ marked an important perspectival shift in the African American's spiritual macrocosm:

If the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God as he desires...We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no color, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, we have only now started (late thought it be) to see our God through our own spectacles...We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God—God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, the one God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia

That Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA) received support from not a few Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Christian Churches suggests that his interpretation of Christ and Christianity had not fallen on deaf ears, especially given that clergymen of various denominations held important positions within Garvey's organization from its inception.

The black activist (prophetic) Christianity resonant in Garvey's religio-political approach did not peak, however, until the 1950s when the black minister/politician became the chief spokesperson for African Americans throughout the nation, despite the hesitance on the part of many northern and midwestern blacks to embrace his leadership. Indeed,

---

55 Members of Houston's Shrine of the Black Madonna agree with Garvey's assessment.
most blacks were still southern and in need of a contemporary savior. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. became their man and the nation’s martyr. Moved by King’s compelling example, black Baptist ministers throughout the country began to interpret the call to ministry as a prophetic call to non-violent social activism, a position that was not rejected until the 1960s when young African Americans regardless of denominational affiliation opted for black Muslim Malcolm X’s militant approach to social justice—“by any means necessary.”

Provided the long-established history of social activism among African American religious leaders of the civil rights and Black Power movements, it is easy to comprehend why many black intellectuals of the immediate post-civil rights period deemed religion extraneous apart from political or social ends, and why they largely assumed Christians who placed a premium on spirituality to be retrogressive if not completely out of step with reality. 59 This was certainly their opinion of African American Pentecostalism of the early-to-mid twentieth century.

Eager to distance African Americans from so-called African primitivity, assimilationist black scholars of the post-Civil Rights era who had at least come to terms with the political vehicle that religious institutions could become still maintained conservative stances that impelled their discounting African American Pentecostalism or provided only limited attention to the movement’s engaging development. In these generally northern-based studies, the Pentecostal movement among blacks was viewed as a

59 Many black theologians and pastors agreed with Washington Gladden’s argument in *Tools and The Man* that “[t]he end of Christianity is twofold, a perfect man in a perfect society.” (1) According to Gladden, [t]hese purposes are never separated; they cannot be separated. No man can be redeemed and saved alone; no community can be reformed and elevated save as the individuals of which it is composed are regenerated. The law and the gospel address themselves to the conscience and the affection of the man, but they address him as a member of the social organism, and the response that he makes must be made through the medium of that organism.” The widespread acceptance of Gladden’s call for a social gospel made those Christians who maintained a predominantly spiritual application of Christianity appear to be rearward. Washington Gladden, *Tools and the Man* (Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York: 1893), 1.
reactionary southern phenomenon resulting from physical displacement, poverty, and social inferiority.\textsuperscript{60} According to E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Church in America* (1974), Pentecostals were rural transplants who gathered in storefront churches in urban areas and engaged in experiential notions of Christianity. Frazier contended that sect-like storefront churches fomented the "...attempt among the lower class to re-create in the urban environment a type of religious organization in which they [could] find warm and sympathetic association and status." Frazier also submitted that such gatherings were transitory, essentially halfway houses between rural and urban life.

Similarly Melvin D. Williams argued that black Pentecostal groups "represent an escape from anomie and an attempt to reestablish 'community' under conditions of alienation and absence of norms."\textsuperscript{61} Williams depicts adherents as rural black southerners who "had never been encouraged to display economic initiative and who therefore remained economically naïve."\textsuperscript{62} He does not give weight to their very progressive social traits, i.e., Pentecostals possessed a high tolerance for difference and individuality.\textsuperscript{63} According to Williams, their ministers were parasitic "uneducated blacks who, upon discovering some charisma in themselves, launch an uncertain and competitive career for status, prestige, and

\textsuperscript{60} As demonstrated in many Northern-based interpretations, descriptions of Black Southern culture are often laden with stereotypical images of intellectual sterility, docility, and poverty. In essence, the general Northern opinion of the South has not really moved beyond the static memories of the those whose ancestors left it during the Great Migration. A native Texan, I became thoroughly aware of this problem when undertaking graduate studies and teaching assignments at Michigan State University. Often during class discussions, students black and white vocalized confidently their belief that the South was socially, politically, and culturally backward, and that the Southern Negro remained a pitiful victim of circumstance. As recently as February 1995 at *Transatlantic Passages*, an international conference sponsored by Harvard University's W.E.B. DuBois Institute, I was further surprised to learn that some of the conference's non-Southern scholars struggled with either nostalgic or static notions of Black Southerness. Only a willingness to accept that the South is not monolithic will help remedy this interpretative dilemma. With its list of firsts in the political arena, like all other portions of the United States, the South has changed dramatically since the Pre-Civil Rights era as John Boles demonstrates in his recent work *The South Through Time* (1995).


\textsuperscript{62} *Ibid.*

\textsuperscript{63} *Ibid.*, 14.
material possessions via religion...They claim[ed] no significant bloodline, no land or
wealth aristocracy, no education, and no exceptional practical experience."\textsuperscript{64} Such
untutored ministers were also threatened by "the new, educated breed of Pentecostal
preacher who is being constantly reminded of the impotence of his seminary training and
his Ph.D."\textsuperscript{65}

The terms "attempt," "escape," "absence," "anomie," and "alienation" along with
references to "bloodline" and "wealth aristocracy" not only suggest a people devoid of
initiative or control but also mock their right to establish community beyond the scope of
dominant cultural norms. Williams's argument risks floundering in that the black
Pentecostal groups he examined were southern migrants; he omitted the socio-religious
experiences of black Pentecostals who remained in the South. Had the possibility for
regional variations been foreseen, the southern black Pentecostals' reasons for physical
migration (socio-economic) might not have been confused with their preference for
Pentecostal worship. Equally as important, it might have been noted that for blacks who
remained in the South, the predilection for Pentecostalism hardly constituted "an escape"
although their choice did require movement, i.e., a conscious spiritual journey toward what
they perceived to be the perfect will of God, the pursuit of which might mandate physical
movement as well. As ironic as the statement may seem, blacks who remained in the
South—regardless of denominational affiliation—had a place. Albeit a restricted one, it was a
place in which many had learned to maneuver quite efficiently, one whose eventual
expansion more than a few had begun to envision despite the opposition. Scholars, then,
overlooked an essential antilogy of the "place" issue, a revolutionary paradox in the
Southwestern socio-political topography of the post-Civil Rights era: In insisting on a
\textit{place} for blacks, whites inadvertently created "foreign territory" in their own environs.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.}, 50.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}
even psychological “territory” over which they gradually lost control. With time black southerners grew more difficult to sway without whites being reminded of their place. Even though the boundaries that whites allotted themselves were considerably more generous, history suggested that they were often ill-begotten and certain to be eroded by the winds of justice.

Prevalent negative interpretations of place in the black South have also led scholars to favor the more obvious sign of aggression inherent in “escaping” the “place of terror” that the South had become for some African Americans; as a result, many missed the more subtle resident strength implicit in “standing one’s ground” as did blacks who remained in the South. The decision of black non-migrants to stay was equally as courageous as their northbound brothers’ determination to leave. After all, despite the once useful nineteenth-century metaphors of the South as Egypt and North as Canaan Land, neither was any longer either after the close of the Civil War. Both were America; both were regions where African Americans had earned a right to live peaceably and without fear. Moreover, if labor, land, and lineage engendered a sense of belonging and ownership, the South was indeed the place that blacks could rightfully claim as home. In fact, historical evidence suggest that many who remained did so because they had learned to thrive in the desert place, i.e., to reconnect “bloodlines” and discover routes to financial security, even to the “wealth aristocracy” that Williams prioritizes.

E. Marvin Goodman affirms as much in his investigation of non-migration among Mississippians in Black Migration in American From 1915 to 1960: An Uneasy Exodus (1990). Goodwin learned that blacks Mississippians who chose not to migrate northward to Chicago did so for five basic reasons: (1) 14 percent of the respondents reported that they experienced no racial problems and like the area; (2) 28 percent stated that they did not

---

want to leave their families; (3) 16 percent affirmed that they either lacked the economic means to transport themselves and their families to the North, or that they were making a good living and were unwilling to leave given their economic viability; (4) 36 percent, the largest portion, stated that they owned property and could not afford, or did not wish to leave it; and finally, (5) the remainder simply stated that they did not like the North.  

Williams's class-conscious evaluation of Pentecostalism is also neutralized by the fact that poverty among southern blacks transcended denominational affiliation at the turn of the century. For example, with increased segregation and discrimination throughout the South and Southwest, 75.1 percent of the black workers in the city of Houston, Texas, in 1900 were employed in the Census Bureau's three lowest job categories (domestic, service workers, and common laborers), and only 2.9 percent of African Americans were classified as professional or semi-professional workers. Among whites 10 percent were professional workers, while only 14.4 percent fell into the three lowest job categories. Given the socio-economic status of the Houston's black community in general, class distinctions from one denomination to the next were perhaps more imagined than real. That is, almost all southern black Christians at the turn of the century were from the lowest socio-economic ranks, and perhaps devoid of formal education. As pre-Pentecostal Sojourner Truth's (1797-1883) contributions to the black liberationist struggle suggest,

---

67 Goodwin's study helps to balance accounts like that of Everett Carll Ladd in *Negro Political Leadership in the South* (1966) which define "power" in purely political terms: "The one word which better than any other describes the position of Negro Americans in the South from the 1890s until the outbreak of World War II is powerlessness...Negroes were totally excluded from positions of decision making in all institutions....All public facilities in the region, including city parks and playgrounds, theaters, hotels, and restaurants were rigidly segregated—as was, of course, the entire school system. The disenfranchisement of Negroes was virtual." Certainly black southerners lacked the power to vote, but the picture of complete immobility that Ladd presents elides too many other expressions of power that become more evident once the veil of Southern racism was lifted.

meager means, illiteracy, and semiliteracy, while they may hinder, do not negate organic intelligence or leadership potential.  

Interestingly enough, nonetheless, the black co-founders of modern-day Pentecostalism need no such grace to be extended them. For Charles H. Mason (1866-1961), Mother Lizzie Roberson (1860-1945), and William J. Seymour (1870-1922) were not illiterate nor were they ineffectual leaders. Their histories alone suggest that while social injustice and unequal access to education may have influenced the immediate socio-economic condition of many first-generation freedmen, the two did not eradicate intrinsic possibility and creativity. Slavery produced false dichotomies that freedom dispelled. In fact, it was the alarming rate at which first-generation freedmen built their own institutions that helped to precipitate the staggering wave of violence and disenfranchisement engulfing much of the South at the turn of the century, injustices that would endure for more than two generations, just long enough for socio-political propaganda to distort the image of a remarkable people.

Fortunately for the study of Pentecostalism, the growing popularity of cultural history as opposed to political and economic history meant that scholars of the 1970s heightened their search for African authenticity and agency. This in turn meant that black Pentecostalism was increasingly viewed as an important carrier of African American culture, especially given that ex-slaves and their offspring spearheaded the Azusa Revival of 1906 and established what has become the largest black Pentecostal denomination in the world.

---

99 Nell Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996). 4 and 293. Painter argues that Truth’s nineteenth-century “perfectionist” beliefs are what we would classify as “pentecostal” in the twentieth century. Painter employs the term “pentecostal” anachronistically because it conveys her meaning more precisely than the nineteenth-century word “perfectionist.” Yet I chose to add the prefix “pre-” to Painter’s description upon learning that Truth smoked until health reasons precluded her doing so. Pentecostal perfectionism as represented in the twentieth century would never approve of such habits. To use their words, Truth “needed a little more victory over the flesh.”
Despite the more than obvious involvement of blacks in twentieth-century Pentecostalism, the telling of the greater story of black Pentecostalism was suspended as scholars of the 1970s debated the movement's origins. Given the pervasive influence of the movement, many white Pentecostals and scholars, not quite ready to claim a 'black' spiritual father, named Charles Parham, Seymour's teacher, the father of Pentecostalism as Vinson Synan does in In Fields White Unto Harvest (1971).70 Tracing Pentecostalism to Armenian-Wesleyan-Methodism, Synan argues that the first Pentecostal-like revival in American history occurred in the camp meeting revivals in Logan County, Kentucky, which John Boles thoroughly examines in Religion in Ante-Bellum Kentucky (1976).71 Initiated in June 1801 by Presbyterian ministers James McGready, William Hodges, and John Rankin, the revival continued for more than a year, climaxed at Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in August 1801, and exhibited the emotive responses found in many American Protestant churches since that time.72 These revivals eventually became more institutionalized as western camp meetings were fused into American religious life. Yet Synan contends that the new Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century received its greatest impetus from the Azusa Street revival of 1906-9 led by William J. Seymour. This revival launched Pentecostalism into a worldwide movement. Located at 213 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, the Azusa Street Mission became the international threshing ground for those seeking the Pentecostal experience. From Azusa Street, the movement spread throughout the world through the mission's newspaper, The Apostolic Faith, and by pilgrims who flocked to Los Angeles to experience tongues.73

72 Ibid., 23.
While Synan argued that Parham deserved fatherhood status, James Tinney contended categorically that William J. Seymour was the “father of modern-day Pentecostalism” even though Seymour was often denied recognition by those who were “contemptible of his race.”\textsuperscript{74} Certainly as Synan suggests, Parham’s Wesleyan-based theological influence cannot be denied, yet Seymour’s contribution cannot be minimized. For whatever lessons Seymour learned from his teacher were necessarily filtered through his own historical experience. This becomes more apparent when one considers that Seymour, Parham’s most prodigious student, was forced to sit \textit{outside} his Houston classroom.

Seymour’s perception was inherently shaped by the marginal status extended to him in a culture bent on eternalizing the “untruth” of his inferiority. Intentionally or unintentionally, his teacher respected that untruth by opting not to challenge tradition. He subsequently forfeited the historical opportunity to secure an indispensable ingredient for Pentecost—unity. For although all may have been in one place, all were not of one accord. Hence the gospel “truth” that Parham proclaimed lost momentum as it echoed through the unyielding walls of prejudice that separated a black Christian Seymour from his white Christian classmates.

No doubt as Seymour sat alone, he formulated his own interpretation of Pentecost, a “re-vision” calling for a level of spirituality and knowing that not only transcended earthly conventions and boundaries but welcomed the spirited worship style of distant African ancestors. As the racialist atmosphere of his teacher’s classes affirmed, neither Parham nor Houston, Texas, was prepared to welcome the kind of revival that Seymour eventually catalyzed; Seymour had to move on. At the moment Seymour initiated his westward journey to California, his spiritual quest exceeded his own personal search for God and grew to symbolize that of any people determined to discover a benevolent and inclusive

\textsuperscript{74}\textit{Ibid.}
expression of divinity in the earth at whatever the cost. When the said people are both black and Pentecostal and in need of a spiritual father, it is safe to argue that William J. Seymour would constitute the more likely historical choice. For it is he whose experience mirrors their own, and he who favors them most. With Seymour they were no longer "bastards" but "sons."

As the debate over the origins of modern Pentecostalism dissipated nonetheless, a growing number of young scholars/intellectuals began to challenge the class-based sociological descriptions of African American Pentecostalism. Treating a black Pentecostal group in an urban setting, for example, Arthur E. Paris took explicit exception to the dominant view of the 1960s and '70s that the black ghetto was overchurched. In an attempt to eradicate the stigma of poverty and deprivation associated with "storefront" churches, he pointed out that "storefront" undertakings were not limited to Pentecostal churches, i.e., that government agencies, police departments, community organizations, and cultural organizations used them. Unlike Frazier who assumed them to be temporary, he argued that many storefront churches were able to maintain their viability despite the effects of competition from external institutions.75 Paris also challenged the traditional view that storefront Pentecostals churches were "exotic, esoteric religious expressions inferior to mainline denominations" and the tendency on the part of scholars to refer to them as "sects" and "cults."76 Most importantly, he definitively rejected functionalist sociological approaches that inhibit exploring Pentecostal churches in depth, and he committed to seeing the world through the eyes of his subjects.

In his effort to explore denominationalism and to explain why Americans use denominational distinctions to differentiate themselves, Peter Goldsmith provided a

76 Ibid., 27.
thorough anthropological description of an African American Pentecostal church on the sea islands of Georgia. Unlike other writers who described black Pentecostalism as a fringe movement, Goldsmith placed African American Pentecostalism within the broader context of American religious history. He correctly pointed out that class distinctions are eradicated in many Holiness churches, and that for AAIP members life was not merely a struggle between the haves and have-nots, but between the "saved" and "unsaved"; spiritual status mattered above all else.

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya broadened the discussion by presenting one of the most comprehensive sociological discussions to date of the black church in *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990). In addition to recognizing the primarily black origins of Pentecostalism, the authors discuss the history and polity of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the largest black Pentecostal denomination; the shout (holy dance); and provide commentary on Pentecostal contributions to contemporary gospel music and African American religious culture in general. Endeavoring to remain objective throughout, Lincoln and Mamiya shy away from value judgments regarding exoticism, emotionalism, and the black Pentecostal experience.

Clarence Taylor's *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (1994) also suggested the advent of a more sympathetic evaluation among intellectuals of the black church in general and black Pentecostalism in particular. Taking an overview of several denominations, Taylor reiterated the absence of class distinctions among Pentecostals that Goldsmith noted

---

in his study. In addition, Taylor raised another important dimension hitherto ignored—saints' underlying adherence to capitalist values:

Churches where working-class people dominated, such as the Holiness-Pentecostal churches, were more resistant to the values of the dominant society. Through Black Holiness-Pentecostal culture, African Americans challenged the dehumanization of black people and created an alternative measure for success that did not exclude anyone on the basis of economic ability. Therefore, they succeeded in winning the loyalty of many blacks. However, they also adapted to some values of the larger society, especially capitalist virtues. They adhered to a capitalist ideology stressing upward social and economic mobility, and consequently, like the mainline churches, the Holiness-Pentecostal churches were both resistant and accommodating.

Taylor's observation is very important one to note, especially given the twentieth-century African-American intellectual's historical mistrust of capitalism. In Prophesy Deliverance, for example, Cornel West suggests that African-American Christianity maintains an ideological preference for communism. While AAPs of the early twentieth-century resisted the socio-economic acculturation that capitalism and racism imposed upon them, they would not have embraced any "world system" hastily, least they miss the will of God. Moreover, their thoroughly westernized AAIP descendants, for better or worse, grew to espouse a brand of Christianity that is capitalistic in notion, particularly African American Charismatics who, in materialistic fashion, constantly express a desire to "name and claim" all that God has for them.

Further adding to the growing number of favorable interpretations, Harvey Cox in Fire From Heaven (1995) attempted to explain the widespread appeal of the Pentecostal movement. Placing early-twentieth-century Pentecostalism within the broader context of American religious history and the international Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, Cox

---

79Black Pentecostals refer to themselves as "saints." The term highlights their continued emphasis on the principles of "sanctification," i.e., spiritual purity in the sight of God and man.
80Although, as Cornel West argued, black Christians were theoretically communistic when they sought inclusion and economic parity, once equality of opportunity furnished them with access to the American Dream, the call for economic sharing quickly dissipated.
linked the intellectual/spiritual origins of American Pentecostalism to early American Puritan and Quaker millenialism, arguing that the White City revival in Chicago, October 1892, and the Azuza Street revival of 1906 in Los Angeles were the primary harbingers of twentieth-century American Pentecostalism. Cox’s Quaker/Puritan connection works neatly for his Boston-based study of Pentecostalism, but it constitutes an awkward point of departure for a history of African American Pentecostalism in the Southwest. Yet Cox clarifies certain aspects of the Pentecostal experience that might otherwise remain incomprehensible to the outsider.82

Helping to initiate a fuller depiction of the Pentecostal personality, Cheryl Sanders, in Saints in Exile (1996), offered one of the few attempts to describe the black Pentecostal from within. The historical development of the Church of God remained secondary to her effort, yet Sanders effectively highlighted the African American Pentecostal’s exilic world view among other pertinent issues.

Beyond the growing number of positive takes on black Pentecostalism thusfar mentioned, some proponents for a reinterpretation of the Pentecostal story took an even bolder step by depicting black Pentecostalism as an authentic protest against socio-economic and spiritual acculturation. The intellectual appreciation for black Pentecostalism among intellectuals of African descent was initiated by black theologian James Cone in his work God of the Oppressed. Here Cone described Pentecostalism as an inherently subversive movement that marked an end to European hegemony in the American religious experience. Yet Cone echoed the sociological implications of class that Williams noted in his study. Cone viewed the advent of Pentecostalism as the deprived African American’s answer to continued disfranchisement and discrimination, a position that I hope to submit to critical re-evaluation. Later Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer reiterated the element of subversion found in Black Pentecostalism in African-American

---

82 In Fire From Heaven (1995), Harvey Cox argues that Pentecostalism was contagious because it helped people recover (1) primal speech: speaking in tongues; (2) primal piety: trances, dreams, and visions; and (3) primal hope: a belief that a radically new world age was about to dawn (81–82).
Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation, and use as a point of departure Zora Neale Hurston’s assertion that “the Sanctified Church is a protest against the highbrow tendency in Negro Protestant congregations as the Negroes gain more education and wealth.”

Paul McIntyre, in Black Pentecostal Music in Windsor, made a notable contribution to the discussion as well. Focusing his attention on Mount Zion COGIC churches established under the leadership of Clarence Lesile Morton, a native of Dover Township and descendant of escaped slaves who settled in the area prior to the American Civil War, McIntyre argued that black Pentecostal worship constituted “an effective antidote to the poison of socially and economically imposed acculturation” experienced by the black community in Ontario. Comparing the American and Canadian “Negroes’ manners of dealing with social oppression, McIntyre contended:

The response of the American Negro...is well known; far from suppressing his collective identity, he has taken active steps to assert his cultural profile. But the black community in Ontario has never been particularly militant...His response, by and large, has been to embrace White culture as quickly and completely as possible, to suppress (in so far as possible) everything about him that is Black, to glory in the amount of White or Indian or anything-else blood that he carries in his veins, and generally to attempt to become a middle-Canadian in everything save the colour of his skin. The idea that success is to be measured in terms of the White world, has become rampant in many sections of the Negro community in Ontario. It is an insidious notion, one that can lead to all sorts of psychological problems for non-Whites who attempt to live by it.

For McIntyre, then, Pentecostalism, was a "highly effective carrier" of the black religious expression—especially in its COGIC form—and also a noteworthy example of organized cultural resistance and self-preservation.

---

83 Ibid., 8-9.
84 Ibid., 9-10.
In search of African agency and authenticity, Historian Sterling Stuckey discussed the African American Pentecostal ‘ring shout’ in *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987). The said shout was a circular sacred dance that survived the Middle Passage, resisted European liturgical norms, and found a permanent place of abode in the emotive services of twentieth-century African American Pentecostals despite its transformation.

Following the nascent development of *black theology* in the 1970s, Joseph Washington acknowledges the permanence of black Pentecostal groups in his work *Black Sects and Cults* (1974), but he does not grant them mainstream status. He argues that “[e]nthusiastic fundamentalism proved more lasting among blacks, not because blacks are inherently more emotional in religion than whites of like circumstances, but because blacks were from their infancy subjugated in the American experience by dominating doctrinaire white evangelicals. Blacks were vulnerable. Thus the proliferation of churches emerges simply because their only alternatives were individual differences.” Washington’s depiction is problematic because it grants racial oppression much more import than it deserves. By the early twentieth century, segregation was so well entrenched in the Southwest that most African Americans chose not to confront it directly and knew no other alternative. Blacks generally avoided the white world to the degree that some African Americans even grew to endorse segregation. Like the black populous at large, black Pentecostals lived in fairly closed communities. Thus while white racism existed in even celebrated form in the South and permeated the world beyond the communal boundaries of African Americans, it did not destroy cultural production within the communities themselves. Washington’s evaluation is further strained by the fact that black southerner William J. Seymour, the primary catalyst for

---

the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, sat willingly under the teachings of white minister Charles Parham in Houston, Texas, despite the prevalence of racism. Seymour bore the inconvenience of discrimination in his pursuit for a greater manifestation of God’s power, even if doing so meant foraging through a trying social wilderness. He further demonstrated a commitment to interracial cooperation in the wake of the Azusa outpouring although Seymour’s white and black followers quickly forgot his example.91

Notwithstanding the pertinence of the theological and historical works that began to validate and authenticate the black Pentecostal experience, the fact still stands that the general narrative of the movement remains understudied despite its more than 100-year history. Of all of the book-length works studied, only five make the study of the African American Pentecostal Experience their primary focus: (1) Melvin D. Williams, Community in a Black Pentecostal Church: An Anthropological Study (1974); (2) Paul McIntyre’s Black Pentecostal Music in Windsor (1976); (3) Arthur E. Paris, Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World (1982); (4) Peter Goldsmith’s When I Rise Cryin’ Holy: African-American Denominationalism on the Georgia Coast (1989); and (5) Cheryl Sanders, Saints in Exile (1995).92 While Journalist Beverly Hall Lawrence’s work Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African Americans Goes Home to Church (1996) highlights the Neo-Pentecostal posture of Baltimore’s once traditional Bethel AME Church, Lawrence’s primary aim is to discuss the welcomed regrafting of middle-class post-civil rights African Americans to their spiritual roots with Pentecostalism being largely embraced as a cultural trophy reclaimed.

Further reiterating the need for in-depth study, all except McIntyre (1976) and Goldsmith (1989) concentrate primarily on northeastern cases. In addition, of some 400 dissertations and theses written on African Americans in Texas between 1904 and 1990,

only three dissertations treat some aspect of African American religion, only one examines Houston's African American community directly, and none elucidates the experiences of independent black Pentecostals. Between 1961 and 1980, only two dissertations dealt directly with some aspect of the African American Pentecostal experience.

Again highlighting the scarcity of research into black Pentecostalism, even while Stanley M. Burgess's and Gary B. McGee's Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (1988) is an excellent reference, of the source books dedicated to African American Pentecostalism, Sherry Sherrod DuPree's Biographical Dictionary of African American Holiness Pentecostals: 1880-1990 is the only published work dedicated solely to the study of black Holiness Pentecostals. The first of DuPree's groundbreaking works contains more than 1000 biographical sketches of Pentecostal ministers, teachers, musicians, etc. While approximately 8 percent of the individuals featured in her work are of southwestern origin—pertinent to my study indeed—the bulk of those highlighted are COGIC affiliates; for example, no individual was labeled "Independent Pentecostal." DuPree's African-American Holiness Pentecostal Movement: An Annotated Bibliography (1996) is an exceptional compilation of more than 3000 pieces meticulously gathered

---

93 While Richard Lee Elam's dissertation "Behold the Fields: Texas Baptists and the Problem of Slavery," (University of North Texas, 1993) does not focus solely on black religion, it provides a thorough examination of the following: the history of black members of select Baptist Churches in Texas; slaveholding families among Texas Baptists; Baptist slaveowners of the Planter class; the nature of slave ownership among Baptists; the wealth of slaveholding Baptists as a percentage of the total for all Baptists; slaveholding leadership within Baptist churches; and black members of Baptist churches in Texas after 1865 for the Austin and Mount Zion associations.


96 Donald Franklin Roth. "Grace Not Race! Southern Negro Church Leaders, Black Identity, and Missions to West Africa, 1865-1919" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1975.)


from private collections, libraries, convention souvenir booklets, dissertations, dramas, plays, FBI reports, magazines and newspapers, gospel recordings, photographs, oral interviews, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) reports, and video tapes. Yet this work too underscores a need for more indepth regional work on black Pentecostalism in the Southwest.

Apart from the general lack of scholarly attention, the history of black Pentecostalism has faced yet another problem. Equally as responsible for the absence of the AAIPC story was the fact that as post-Civil Rights African Americans gained in self-respect and appreciation, members of mainline denominations often returned to charismatic modes of worship without thanking Pentecostals for preserving them. This trend is most prevalent in developments of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s when African American intellectuals and professionals, "whitened" by their new socio-cultural milieu, began to find that reaffirming their African American cultural identity required returning to a black and increasingly charismatic church. Beverly Lawrence Hall’s work *Reviving the Spirit* (1996) constitutes a notable exception.  

The collective intellectual opinion and scholarly representation of African American Pentecostals was again left understudied because few early African American Pentecostals of the pre-civil rights era penned their own stories or shared them with the traditional press. Several factors engendered the apparent breech of communication. First, writing their own stories would have been interpreted as vainglorious for some, for AAIPs were constantly taught to court humility, to avoid foolish pride, and to "give God the glory" as opposed to themselves. Moreover, education was secondary to spiritual perfection and valued only insofar as it served a functional purpose. Beyond this fact

---


98 As I interviewed first and second generation AAIPs for this project, I found that not a few had a difficult time crediting themselves with having done anything. Many often spoke using and all-inclusive "we" so as not to praise themselves, and most prefaced accomplishments with phrases such as "God blessed me to..." "The Lord blessed me to..." This tendency is clearly based on AAIP teachings to deny self. I also found that the younger the AAIP-C pastor, the more eager (s)he was to tell his/her story.
educational opportunities for African Americans in the pre-Civil Rights Southwest were minimal to non-existent. In Texas, for example, black teachers were underpaid, with black male teachers earning only 58 percent of what their white counterparts were paid for their service to the community; and the Texas College for Negroes (Texas Southern University) was established in 1948, just fifty years ago. In essence, hindrances to black social progress were structural and behavioral, pervasive and profound. Preferring to send blacks who sought educational advancement northward, even going so far as to finance graduate and professional education in the “Promised Land,” white southern institutions were not at all interested in producing “home-grown” black scholars, Rice University and the University of Texas included. Given the general disregard for the educational improvement of African Americans demonstrated at local and state levels, that anti-intellectualism would frame some attitudes is no surprise. The silencing of black sages and general silence in the South are complex issues. The oppressive system of the period produced whites, Creoles, and blacks who learned to rely upon the "unspoken," "coded," and "masked" for communication. As a result, their real stories, especially those concerning their dealings with each other, were often ensconced in what was not said, done, or seen. For this reason, the smile and the shotgun, submission and subversion were rarely out of touch among them; very often, their words were "smoother than butter," but "war was in [their] heart[s]." (Psalm 55: 21) Despite the pervasive theory of "don't-show-or-tell," members of each community continued to live and even thrive in their race-conscious society, but not with negative consequences. The silencing of black southwestern sages not only encouraged and rewarded ignorance, but created an entire cult of ignoring, slighting, omitting, neglecting, excluding, and not seeing. Among the innocent, unsuspecting, or non-reflecting, all collectively risked spawning callowness, inexperience, naïveté, unawareness, and even rawness.

Yet it is the pervasive practice of not-seeing that has helped obscure the certain influence of African American men and women affiliated with the Holiness-Pentecostal
movement since its inception. Even more astounding has been the degree to which claims of Pentecostal anti-intellectuality have been exaggerated, particularly given that its pioneers, as stated earlier, were not only literate individuals, but publishers in their own right. Although Mason did not complete his seminary training, his reasons for leaving school were purely doctrinal. They had little if anything to do with an innate aversion to intellectual matters.99

The pervasive promotion of ignorance by whites bent on perpetuating the myth of black inferiority could not help but affect some blacks living in the South and Southwest, even some Pentecostals perhaps. For example, Houston’s late Reverend Lola Nelson found resistance to her educational background when she entered the Pentecostal movement in the 1960s. While she maintained her Pentecostal belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and in the gifts of the spirit, she eventually transferred her membership to Houston’s well known Wheeler Avenue Baptist church where she became the first African American woman in Texas to be ordained as a Baptist minister. The anti-educational attitude that Nelson faced nonetheless cannot be accurately attributed to ignorance alone. For by the 1960s, part of saints’ resistance to education stemmed not from a supposed aversion to “learning,” but from the academy’s resistance to them as well as outsiders’ insistence on so-called better ways whose reasons for adoption were never convincingly communicated to those whom they were supposed to benefit. As modern psychologists have suggested, “not learning” among some black Pentecostals may have been a defensive posture.

Nelson’s experience, however, was not universal. Third generation AAIP pastor Reverend Martin of Kansas100 recalled that despite the general anti-educational mood among some AAIPs, Bishop H.W. Falls, founder of the World Wide Fellowship and the

99 It should be noted that sustained spirituality presupposes reflection long with the desire for Understanding, Experiencing, and Knowing. Yet spirituality leaves room for formal and informal expressions of each. The black Pentecostal mind separates spirit from intellect, recognizing that thoughts devoid of the divine will certainly to lead to error.

100 Reverend Martin’s first name was not provided.
first black pastor in Houston to embrace the Latter Rain Movement, encouraged him to take advantage of the educational opportunities newly afforded to African American southerners as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. In other words, those who were socio-culturally aware were able to declare as did Ellison’s underground protagonist in *Invisible Man*: “I’m invisible, but not blind.”\(^{101}\) Not being seen did not preclude one’s seeing oneself nor did it obscure spotting the sometimes pernicious other.

In addition to the complexities emanating from the southern cult of ignoring, the AAIP-C story suffered further because AAIP pastors, most of whom were full-time laborers and ministers, simply did not have the time to write their stories or to dedicate their attention to abstract theological concerns.\(^{102}\) Despite AAIP’s inadvertent or deliberate reluctance to codify their religious world view or philosophy of life, pastors certainly spoke about many issues; the preponderance of recordings suggest as much. However, with the passage of time and given that the first generation of AAIP pastors is now approaching the age of reminiscence, stories concerning the heroic ministries of the saints of yesteryear are beginning to regularly embellish their messages.

Thanks to a budding reflective mood among black Pentecostals,\(^{103}\) a shift among black intellectuals and theologians toward inclusivity with regards to the African-American religious experience, and to the employment of new cultural historical approaches, the story of African American Independent Pentecostalism in the Southwest is ripe for the telling. How to initiate that telling, then, is the last issue to be resolved.

With the demands of historical scholarship on one hand and a extensive personal knowledge of black Pentecostals on the other, I sought methodologies and theories that

---


\(^{102}\) A father of nine children, Bishop Roy Lee Kossie admitted that he “felt led” to write when he started his ministry in 1953 at age 27, but did not because familial and ministerial responsibilities complicated doing so on a consistent basis.

\(^{103}\) Pastor Carlton Pearson of Higher Dimensions Ministries in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Bishop T.D. Jakes of West Virginia, Jackie McCullough of New York, Harvey Hess of Michigan and others have both popularized and legitimized African American Pentecostal worship styles and homiletic forms. Educated yet ardently connected to their Pentecostal roots, each has helped to liberate adherents from stereotypical charges of anti-intellectualism and other-worldliness.
satisfied the following criteria: (1) they were flexible enough to allow for the story's unfolding, yet sturdy enough to contain developments without restraining them; (2) they functioned like canvases as opposed to frameworks in that my project is more readily analogous to an exercise in historical portraiture (description) than to one in theoretico-linguistic proficiency; (3) finally, the theories chosen needed to accent, highlight, and complement the subject without drawing undue attention to themselves or forcing an obtrusive display of any analytical agility that I may possess.

As noted earlier, the collective contributions of Arthur Paris, James Tinney, Lincoln and Mamiya, Clarence Taylor, Harvey Cox, and Cheryl Sanders have helped to initiate a cultural historical reading of the AAIP-C story. James Tinney sets this process into motion by reaffirming the black origins of modern Pentecostalism. Paris then defends the historical significance of black Pentecostalism, proclaiming its viability as a subject of American religious history. Examining the social organization of the Church of God In Christ (COGIC), the largest black Pentecostal denomination in the world. Lincoln and Mamiya prove that structure is not foreign to Pentecostals. Challenging notions of non-social participation, Taylor points to their cultural resistance and economic resilience. Moreover, Cox highlights their inherent Americanity, casting them as twentieth-century reenactors of the Puritan Mission. Bringing the discussion even closer to the subjects, Sanders, demystifies their theocratic worldview by proffering that it turns on an exile/return thematic construct.

As the aforementioned scholars begin to suggest, telling the AAIP-Cs story requires enacting what Pentecostals themselves believe to be their radical spiritual commission: turning the (interpretative) world upside down. Thus while Weberian models have permitted social scientists to discover socio-political and organizational truths about black religion in general and black Pentecostalism in particular, they have also inhibited studying the cultural aspects of a group whose history does not naturally submit itself to socio-political analysis.
Mirroring the call for a more inclusive theoretical discourse, Arthur Paris affirmed in *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World* (1982) that the prevailing social-scientific approach led to a preponderance of analyses that focused—usually derisively—on superficial appearances and characteristics that scholars rarely understood:

Too often, both the popular mind and the social science literature have seemed to miss the point, focusing, for example, on the enthusiasm associated with lower-class Black religious expression while treating that expression with condescension and a lack of understanding and viewing it as inferior to the ‘normative’ practice of mainline White denominations.  


[T]his study differs from an older form of black scholarship that modeled itself methodologically after studies that sought solely to describe the impact of oppression on the oppressed. The results of such endeavors were predictable, namely, high levels of pathological disorder psychologically socially, politically, and religiously. Obviously that type of scholarship prevented blacks from emerging in the literature as agents of constructive social change.

Although Paris’s project highlights the black Christian tradition as it is represented in African American denominations of the Baptist and Methodist traditions, the crux of his analysis applies to African American Pentecostals as well. For African American Pentecostals—despite their distinct theological orientation—have shared the same historical and structural space with their Methodist and Baptist contemporaries, a place where institutionalized racism created formidable barriers to progress and valuation. Moreover, even while the AAIP theological approach and liturgical response differed,

---

AAIPs demonstrated early in their history that “independence” was a necessary condition for freedom and self-actualization.\textsuperscript{107}

Using Paris and Paris as a layered point of departure, I will rely on anthropological, sociological, literary, and theological theories to inform and guide the structure of my narrative. Gerlach and Hine will be employed to describe the politico-organization of black Pentecostal churches. Carl S. Dudley’s and Thomas’s sociological model will be consulted to map AAIP-Cs’ level of community involvement while Dudley and Johnson will be used to examine the AAIP-C mission.\textsuperscript{108} In an effort to depict the AAIP-C personality, I will rely on selected writings Carole Boyce Davies,\textsuperscript{109} literary theorist; and Cheryl Sanders, ethicist.\textsuperscript{110} With the structure of AAIP-C churches, their perceived general mission, and personality thoroughly disclosed, I will attempt to evaluate the totality of the AAIP-C experience in the twentieth century, reflecting finally on selected writings of theologians/scholars Dwight Hopkins and Cornel West.\textsuperscript{111}

As Gerlach and Hine\textsuperscript{112} suggest and Baer and Singer accurately note, three organizational principles prevail among black Pentecostals: (1) decentralization; (2) segmentation; and (3) reticulation:

An acaephalous (headless) or polyccephalous (many-headed) pattern of leadership expresses the decentralized character of social movements. Like the larger Holiness-Pentecostal movement...the Black Holiness-Pentecostal movement has not overarching organization to coordinate or define its structural content, beliefs, activities, and membership requirements....

Segmentation in a movement means that it is "composed of a great variety of localized groups or cells which are essentially independent, but which can combine to form larger configurations or divide to form smaller ones." Even more so than the Baptist and Methodist tradition, fission and fusion have characterized the Holiness-Pentecostal movement. A specific Sanctified congregation "may be affiliated with several denominations at different times in its history, or with none at all. Despite the many schism, there is a camaraderie of spirit, and all come together for fellowship meetings and revivals and conventions."

"Reticulation refers to the system by which 'cells, or nodes, are tied together, not through any central point, but rather through intersecting sets of personal relationships and other intergroup linkages." The linkage between cells or congregations operate at both the personal and organizational levels. Leaders of Sanctified churches often are acquainted with leaders of other congregations in either their vicinity or other parts of the country. These connections may emanate from friendship of kinship ties or mutual membership in an association. Revivals conducted by traveling evangelists also serve to reticulate Sanctified congregations.

As Baer and Singer suggest, the dynamism perceived among Pentecostals stems directly from the open-ended administrative structure associated with movements in general. Independent Pentecostals shy away from complex hierarchical structures that imply permanency or confinement, particularly given that they are conditioned to live in an expectant mode, one that inherently guards both the people and movement against stagnation and atrophy.

Carl S. Dudley and Thomas Van Eck provide a comprehensive sociological framework for understanding differences among denominations; socio-economic effects; church location and size; congregational theology, orientation to society, and congregational self-images of social ministry in "In Social Ideology and Community

---

113 Gerlach and Hine, People, Power, and Change, 41.
114 Cited in Baer and Singer, 157—60.
115 Ibid.
116 While their discussion of the politico-organization of Holiness-Pentecostals is accurate, their assertion that "Black Holiness and Pentecostal groups have not formed counterparts of white-controlled interdenominational or ecumenical bodies such as the National Holiness Association, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Full Gospel Businessman's Fellowship International" needs more elaboration. An investigation of the causes for the lack of interracial cooperation may reveal a myriad of issues that race alone cannot explain.
Ministries: Implications from Church Membership Surveys." The paradigms they suggest are directly applicable to the AAIP-C case.

Dudley and Van Eck found that churches differentiated themselves in the following manner: (1) **evangelical** churches showed a strong conversionist approach to salvation and a high percentage of members who take a literal interpretation of the Bible; (2) **liberal** churches reflected a strong gradualist approach to salvation and a low percentage of members with a literal interpretation of the Bible; and (3) **moderate** churches possess a blend of conversionist and gradualist approaches and a moderate percentage of members with a literal interpretation of the Bible.118

The authors also discovered that churches approached social issues, community involvement, and focus of ministry in three ways: (1) the **sanctuary** approach has an emphasis on an educational approach to social issues, low community involvement, and an emphasis on serving current church members; (2) **civic** has a mix of education and activism on social issues, moderate involvement in the community, and a blend of serving both members and the world; and (3) **activist** has an avowed activist approach to social issues, support for community involvement and an emphasis on the church serving the world.119

Equally as important, Dudley and Van Eck noted five patterned self-images by which churches communicate their stories: (1) **pillar churches** provide the anchor for their communities and have strong feelings of responsibility for it; (2) **pilgrim churches**, rather than focusing on place, provide spiritual and cultural shelter for racial and ethnic groups; (3) **survival churches** have a lifestyle of weathering crises, and, although constantly on the verge of disaster, they will endure; (4) **prophet churches**, when they

---

118 Ibid., 7.
119 Ibid.
see evil, take a pro-active stance to transform the condition; and (5) servant Churches seek to live their faith in quiet service to help particular individuals in their time of need.

Dudley and Johnson complete the rubric by adding that "[p]rophet congregations are significantly more inclined toward corporate congregational action on social issues, and they share with Pilgrim churches in their priority on local social ministry and an emphasis on advocacy for social justice issues. By contrast, Pillar and Servant churches have a more conservative social ideology, fewer members who support the church’s involvement in local justice ministries, and fewer who agree the church should be working for justice. Survivor and Pilgrim churches, perhaps feeling trapped and punished by circumstances beyond their control, see poverty caused more by systemic problems than individual failures; Pillar and Servant churches place more responsibility on the individual and less on the system. In short, how churches ‘read’ their history directly affects their present perceptions and future preparations for ministry.”

Unlike Weberian models, which measured political and economic determinants alone, the aggregate findings of Dudley, Johnson and Van Eck permit exploring the black Pentecostals theocratic worldview along with its varied liturgical, exegetical, and communal configurations. Their studies also permit a welcomed parting from the clichéd “ignorant-poor-otherworldly” triad that has dominated many discussions of black Pentecostals for some ninety years—the greater part of the twentieth century.

Literary Theorist Carole Boyce Davies and Ethicist Cheryl Sanders offer a cogent theoretical backdrop for characterizing the personality of African American Independent Pentecostal-Charismatics in the Southwest. As the group’s multiple identity suggests, at least four points of tension define the AAIP-Cs existence: AAIP-Cs are black in a continent that privileges white; independent in a social community that courts hierarchy and superstructure; Pentecostal or Charismatic in a world that accommodates the

---

mainline; southwestern in a meta-historical narrative that favors northern-southern paradigms. The ramifications of these distinctions alone are enough to fill volumes.

To further complicate matters, AAIP-Cs are spiritual in a material world, a world that they are in but not of, as Cheryl Sanders points out in Saints in Exile (1995). Sanders views exile and marginality as oppositional forces; however, I will argue that for many of the “saved, sanctified and set apart” the two are worn diademically. Such a purview essentially allows them to put negative forces (racism, classism, etc.) into spiritual perspective as had William J. Seymour, their spiritual father.

This duality that Sanders underscores with the exile/return motif—their being in but not of this world—brings to bare four interrelated motifs that also inform the black Pentecostal experience: (1) the sojourner; (2) journey; (3) arrival; (4) departure. To better clarify their relationship to the black Pentecostal case, I engage Carole Boyce Davies’s theory of “migratory subjectivities”121 outlined in Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject. Davies’s theoretical construct provides a much needed opportunity for redefining “marginal” subjects “away from exclusion and marginality.” For example, Davies proposes seeing “black women’s writings as...a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing.” She further argues that such “…cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives” allow for a “migratory subjectivity” in which the subject becomes its own authority, maps its own territories, adopts its own law.122 Davies continues:

Black women’s writing/existence, marginalized in the terms of majority-minority discourses, within the Euro-American male or female canon or Black male canon...redefines its identity as it re-connects and re-members, brings together black women dis-located by space and time...If we see Black women’s subjectivity as migratory subjectivity existing in multiple

---

122 Ibid., 4.
locations, then we can see how their work, their presences traverse all of the geographical/national boundaries instituted to keep our dislocations in place. This ability to locate in a variety of geographical and literary constituencies is peculiar to the migration that is fundamental to African experience as it is specific to the human experience as a whole.123

A similar theoretical foundation can be imagined for initiating a study of the black Pentecostal case. Consider the following revision in which black Pentecostals have been substituted for black women writers:

The black Pentecostal's organic religious experience, marginalized in the terms of both majority mainline and minority mainline religious and secular experiences redefines its identity as it re-connects and re-members, brings together black Pentecostals dis-located by space and time and often silenced by the predominant historical/theological discourse. If we see black Pentecostal's subjectivity as migratory subjectivity existing in multiple locations (local, regional, national, international), then we can examine how they continue to thrive despite the forces (systemic and academic) that institute their marginalization. Their ability to persevere in a variety of cultural and geographic constituencies is peculiar to the migration that is fundamental to black Pentecostal experience in particular as it is specific to the human experience as a whole.

The establishment of a “migratory subjectivity” effectively places the subject itself at its individual center; home is wherever the subject wills it to be. The AAIP-C experience then is its own legitimation, with each Pentecostal group possessing its personal expression of Pentecostalism. This healthier self-centeredness means that the subjects are in a position to negotiate and to decide how far they will travel with systems that do not fully complement their interpretation of the God in the earth. Their “going a piece of the way with them” assumes agency and responsibility.124 The journey motif here invoked however “is not so much ‘oppositional consciousness’ which can suggest a certain fixity, but a consciousness which turns on ‘migration,’ mobility, departure, return,
re-departure, transformation.”

Because of their journey, then, AAIP-Cs have been primary articulators of the contemporary African American quest for identity, voice, legitimacy and place. The full account of their untold story, parallels that of their enslaved ancestors whose silencing Dwight Hopkins revisits in Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives (1991):

...[T]he Slave Narrative Collection languished for quite some time in the dusty rooms of the Library of Congress. Ulrich B. Phillips, a Georgia-

---

125 Exploring the journey motif as it relates to the black Pentecostal experience reveals the following: Black Pentecostals view themselves as Sojourners with purpose. For as long as they are in the world, they are expected to busy themselves with its transformation—one soul at a time—while resisting conformation to its standards and/or spiritual contamination. Since according to their belief “this world is not their home” and they are ultimately heaven-bound (although earth-blessed), they live in a constant state of spiritual readiness. Thus they wear the world’s material trappings like loose garments least they risk being weighted down by them at the moment of their savior’s unpublished appearing. When he does return, adherents want to have completed whatever their particular assignment(s). None wants to “get caught with [his/her] works undone.” After all, for black Pentecostals life is definitely not over after death. As some affirm, “this [life on earth] is simply a dress rehearsal” for the eternal life in heaven (or hell). Wanting to “make heaven” (go to heaven) while saving as many souls as possible before Christ’s advent, all “work while it is day” for none have time to waste. Thus action—movement—is always in order.

The millennial reasons for spiritual alertness are complemented by earthly rationales for the same. Adherents must live flexibly enough to adapt to change and/or relocation as soon as either is suggested by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, believing that they can “miss their season,” “moment,” or “hour” of blessing, adherents try to take careful advantage of God-ordained opportunities, spiritual or otherwise.

Their spiritual state of “dressed readiness” then engenders images of both arrival and departure, with the latter receiving the greater emphasis. As the lyrics of two praise songs convey, dressed in “their traveling shoes” adherents are always “packing up and getting ready to go.” The inferred journey is unlimited, taking them wherever the spirit leads. Yet the purpose for going is primarily evangelical—adherents “go into highways and hedges” (city and country) to “tell” of their experience (salvation, healing, deliverance) and to “compel” others to come to Christ.

Journeys, be they internal or external, are never taken alone. God is always with them, although he sometimes withdraws himself so that his presence is not taken for granted; to test adherents’ faith in him; or to simply allow them to enjoy their temporary surroundings—picnic lunches with Adam or conversations with Eve. Sometimes God speaks to them directly while at other times he sends representatives: divine messengers (angels), men, women, children, saints, sinners, climatic conditions, situations, dreams, and even animals or insects if need be. After all, the Creator has unlimited access to his creation. All life emanates from some part of him and can speak on his behalf.125

Sometimes saints meet fellow sojourners who have been led to the same destination or situation—positive or negative, “on the mountain or in the valley.” In such cases they act as companions to each other. “I’m going through the same thing” one saint might admit to another, thereby providing an opportunity to strengthen each other with prayer, the word of God, songs, and spiritual songs. Never using this opportunity to descend even deeper into maelstrom—which evokes the “misery loves company” motif—saints who find others in a similar negative situation generally take on a militant spiritual disposition—“one can chase a thousand, and two ten thousand to flight.” In essence, their attitude suggests “since we’re in this thing together, let’s praise our way out.”

The flexible journeying, internal or external, then necessitates a portable faith. In accord with a popular AAIP-C praise, they “take the Lord along with [them] everywhere they [go]. Why? Because “[they] will need him, [they] will need him everywhere they go.” Their portable faith is one that adherents should “hide in their hearts”. Doing so, however, requires hearing, reading, and studying the bible: a guidebook for daily living, a sure map to Zion, the way to truth and light.
born Yale professor, had proposed profound questions regarding the narratives’ authenticity. This was not a light matter. Phillips, considered the “historian’s historian,” dismissed the words of the former slaves with this claim: “Ex-slave narratives in general were issued with so much abolitionist editing that as a class, their authenticity is doubtful...Unfortunately, it took forty years before scholarship began to refute the extremely biased, if not racist, research by Phillips. The year 1972 marked a qualitative turning point for slave narrative scholarship. At that time Eugene D. Genovese’s Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made came off the presses. Perhaps even more significant were the publications that year by two African American scholars: volume one of The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, edited by George P. Rawick...; and The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, by John W. Blassingame. Rawick began to make the Slave Narrative Collection available to the public for the first time, and Blassingame’s text pioneered research into establishing the contours of the slave community from the words and thoughts of the slaves themselves.

The story of black Pentecostalism has suffered from similar circumstances, although scholars alone are not to blame. Perhaps realizing that the lack of education or decorum were hardly the fundamental reasons for their ancestors’ laborious existence, black intellectuals of the latter decades (1980s and 1990s) now possess the experiential distance to see the wisdom in unlearned tongues as did the founders of Pentecostalism—clearly ahead of their time in their effort to recapture the spiritual vitality of plantation praise houses. The founders’ historical vindication is indeed good news given my aim to tell the story of their twentieth-century descendants—passionate worshippers committed to speaking in unknown tongues. A detailed study of their lives and world view will reveal that African American Pentecostals\textsuperscript{126} have been willing migrants, spiritually and literally imbued with “the sobriety of tragedy, the struggle for freedom, and the spirit of hope”\textsuperscript{127} despite their exilic experience.\textsuperscript{128} Indeed, as long as they continue to reflect the

\textsuperscript{126} I use this term to refer to the collective body of twentieth-century African American Pentecostals, including Independents, Neo-Pentecostals, Charismatics, Neo-Charismatics, and otherwise.


\textsuperscript{128} Cheryl Sanders, Saints in Exile (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). AAIP-Cs based their belief in separation from the world on several New Testament scriptures, e.g., I John 2:15: “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in
quintessence of African-American Christianity,\textsuperscript{129}—prophetic, sanctuary, or otherwise—their move will always be on.

Chapter 1: The Southwest: A Place of Possibility

The southwestward migration and flourishing of African American Pentecostals (AAP) fits neatly into the historical chain of migration experiences informing the national American saga, one filled with "seekers," people on the move always and in search of more. As in every case, adaptability, flexibility, creativity, and determination were keys to their surviving the exigencies of resultant transplantings. Far beyond constituting yet another inspirational American story, the migratory experience of AAPs in the Southwest offers a unique occasion to re-examine the greater African American quest for identity, place, and spiritual renewal—a quest whose AAP version has been complicated by at least five points of tension since the advent of modern-day Pentecostalism: AAPs are "black" citizens in a country that favors "white"; spiritual newcomers among traditional black Christians; and "Southwestern" (horizontal) in an academic narrative that largely prefers northern/southern paradigms (vertical). AAP women faced limitations posed by rigid gender constructions. Adding to the complexity, African American Independent Pentecostals (AAIPs) of the late 1940s and '50s inherited the additional burden of being "independent" in a social community that privileged "power structure." Although more than thrice removed from social acceptability, even to the degree of being marginalized within the African-American community throughout most of the twentieth century, black Pentecostalism became the most influential religious movement in the

---

latter twentieth century,\(^3\) even to the degree of influencing non-Pentecostal black denominations.\(^4\) Such a phenomenal repositioning merits a critical evaluation not only of the people, but of the geographical region from which AAPs chose to work out and expand their socio-spiritual mission.

As the dual description "Southwest" implies, an inescapable degree of cultural complexity informs the cultural geography of the region in which black Pentecostalism began to flourish. Throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the South constituted the unyielding "other" end of a bipolar reality consisting of assumed diametric ends, e.g., black and white, bond and free, North and South, urban and rural. The life experiences of ex-slaves Linda Brent, Frederick Douglass, and others reinforced an interpretative dichotomy of progression versus stasis that proved difficult to alter in the imagination. In their narratives of flight and rebellion, the South was equated with "Egypt" and the North with "the Promised Land." The heavens even seemed to participate in the extended metaphor with the North star perfectly positioned to guide fleeing slaves into a better "northern" world.

In the post-Reconstruction era, the lines of cultural demarcation were also starkly drawn between black intellectuals of the early twentieth century. Harvard educated northerner, W.E.B. Du Bois was often contrasted with his self-made, Southern contemporary, Booker T. Washington. To many Du Bois offered a noble, albeit classist, solution to black progress in *The Souls of Black Folks* with his call for a "talented tenth." To others familiar with Washington's famous Atlanta Exposition speech and contributions as founder of the Tuskegee Institute, the founder/race-leader represented an accommodationist program that seemed to support and perpetuate the notions of white supremacy and black inferiority.

---


The North/South dichotomy was reinforced all the more by sustained violence against blacks in the South. It was the horror of a lynching and the 1906 Atlanta riot that ignited Du Bois’s adamant campaign for social change, an effort that further exaggerated the ideological wedge that separated him and Washington.\(^5\) Equally as troubling, continued violence against blacks led many outside the region to engage in stereotyping. Those from without the South tended to assume that the “sensible,” the “intelligent,” and “enterprising” left the region in order to maintain their dignity, and find prosperity and opportunity. As Charles Chesnutt suggested, matters were more complex than they seemed. In *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), he surmised that “[i]n the South, an obscure jealousy of the negro’s progress, an obscure fear of the very equality so contemptuously denied, furnished a rich soil for successful agitation.”\(^6\) He further argued that “[s]tatistics of crime, ingeniously manipulated, were made to present a fearful showing against the negro. Vital statistics were made to prove that he had degenerated from an imaginary standard of physical excellence which had existed under the benign influence of slavery. Constant lynchings emphasized his impotence, and bred everywhere a growing contempt for his rights.”\(^7\) According to Chesnutt, blacks responded to their dilemma in one of two ways:

Some colored men accepted the situation thus outlined, if not as desirable, at least as inevitable... Many of the most enterprising and progressive left the state, and those who remain still labor under a sense of wrong and outrage which renders them distinctly less valuable as citizens.\(^8\)

Yet all “negros (Southern and Northern) were [being] taught that this [America was] a white man’s country, and that the sooner they made up their minds to this fact, the better

---


\(^6\) Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 238.

\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid., 241.
for all concerned." Even still violence against blacks persisted well into the modern age, precipitating the Great Migration, an unprecedented moment in African American history.

While the bulk of southern African Americans moved northward in search of greater opportunity and freedom from violence, thousands of others chose the New South and West as viable places to achieve the same. Texas was one of their states of choice, yet it was full of contradictions. So synonymous had Texas become with violence by the early twentieth century that G. Bernard Shaw declined to visit America "lest they whip his wife in Texas or lynch him." Shaw's concerns were not unfounded. For purportedly "thousands of white people in Waco, Texas... had made a holiday out of the torture and burning of Jesse Washington," a seventeen-year-old of "deficient mentality" who allegedly raped and murdered his white employer's wife May 8, 1916. According to a report published in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, not even Black soldiers were spared. When the 24th Colored Infantry Regiment was transferred to a post in Houston, Texas, in 1917, its members were "disarmed, jim-crowed, and ... occasionally beaten by local police. In August another member of the 24th was also battered by a police officer. However, once Black troops were apprised that a mob was forming, "they armed themselves and on August 23 marched into the city and fought back...Two black men and seventeen whites, including five policemen, were killed." Consequently, "[n]inety-nine of the Black soldiers were sentenced to prison for terms ranging from a few years to life (the last were pardoned in 1938); and thirteen of the Black soldiers were

---

hanged.14 Violence against blacks in Texas had so escalated that more than 1000 black men, women, and children had been either lynched or murdered by 1920.

On the other hand, the unyielding cultural backdrop that came to distinguish “the South” as a region apart from the North was gradually rivaled by the “newer” West, a vaste expanse of territory that had captivated the American imagination since the early nineteenth century. For whites and blacks of the Old North and South, the west represented freedom, opportunity, and change. The area was attractive to blacks not only because the Missouri Compromise and other legislation prohibited the expansion of slavery into new western territories, but also because blacks possessed a long history in the west. They had inherited a penchant for excitement from the black Spanish explorers, fur traders, freedmen, and cowboys15 who had not only roamed but helped settle the southwestern plains. Accordingly, a significant number of freedmen in the west continued to prosper and imagine prosperity even though their liberties were gradually curtailed as more numerous groups of white settlers, equipped with illegal slaves and racialist ideology, journeyed southwestward as well. Yet the success of progressive African Americans in tandem with the region’s relative newness to the Union16 meant that the hope of freedom was never completely extinguished among them. Equally as important, because most of the West remained rural and agricultural and had been only recently settled by the turn of the twentieth century, their experience with displacement and/or urbanization was not as traumatic as it had been for their northbound kindred, for few western cities matched the socio-economic complexity of Boston, New York, or Chicago at the time.

Anti-black immigration laws in many western states suggested that old world memories invariably influenced the construction of the new. Yet the cultural geography

14 Ibid.
15 Nat Love, an African American cowboy at the turn of the century, recounted his adventures in his autobiography.
16 Texas entered the union in 1838 and California, 1849.
and demands of mid-, far-, and southwestern life hardly permitted a perfect regrafting of the Old Southern strand of the Northern/Southern binary. For while whites had launched a devastating attack on Native American life and culture in the Old North and South, with Andrew Jackson’s campaign representing one of the most devastating challenges to the strength of the Cherokee Nation in Georgia, Native American nations in the West continued to mount effective resistance well into the twentieth century, and sometimes with the help of African American relatives, at other times, without. Mexican influence continued to shape culture and language in the Southwest even though Mexicans residing in “Tejas” had been declared “alien” in the aftermath of Texas’s war with Mexico. In California, Asian immigrants introduced yet another culture into the complex tapestry of western life. They created not only a vibrant community for themselves, but an enriched one for other Americans. Indeed, such elemental variety resisted facile classification.

While the western experience for blacks was not without difficult moments, historical evidence suggests that the promises associated with the West in the black imagination overrode the recurring nightmare of white vigilante violence. For the region was expansive enough for blacks to experiment with four unprecedented expressions of power even though structural and behavioral problems would delay the full articulation thereof: (1) numerical power as a united “free” polity of people (political); (2) the right to own property (economic); (3) the freedom to move (physical); (4) the authority to invoke and interpret the “Spirit” (socio-religious).

In Texas where 30 percent of population was of African descent at the turn of the century, blacks had begun to purchase property and establish their own towns and residential enclaves (e.g., Mexia, Barrett Station and Freedman’s Town) even before 1865. Just a few thousand square miles smaller than Zaire and large enough to hold France within its wild frontiers, Texas was capacious enough for blacks to purchase land and thereby avoid well-established seedbeds of racism. Having their own property presented
a new opportunity to develop the “staying power” to ride out one trying season of the social storms after another. Certainly places that had been transformed into killing fields of the period—e.g., Longview, Palestine, Waco—would not have been chosen for picnic lunches or layovers, especially when black Texans knew “there was no attempt to punish lynchers,” and that “photo-cards showing the lynching[s] and lynchers were hawked about the street[s]” in some places. White residents in some areas even forewarned black travelers upon their arrival that the latter were not welcome in “this town.” Dr. R.S. Lovingood, President of Samuel Houston College in Austin, Texas, had such an experience during his travels in the South. “Take your head back, nigger, or we will knock it off,” Dr. Lovingood was advised upon his arrival in a “small Texas village.” The college president was careful to note, however, that bigotry was hardly confined to the Southwest. Someone yelling “Look here, darkey, don’t get off at this station” had greeted the doctor in Southern Illinois. As Lovingood implied, the difference in southern racism and bigotry other parts of the country was a question of degree and not kind.

The concept of private property not only fostered their survival but provided an opportunity for pioneer work. This is particularly true of African Americans migrating into the Southwest. Unlike their northbound counterparts who migrated into urban spaces where institutions and their constituents were firmly in place, those who moved southwestward in segregated communities inherently exercised their opportunity to experiment with nation building. In the South and West, the church, the institution that free blacks understood best, was the first to received their organization skills and creative energies. Equally as important, the church permitted an important politico-sacred

---

21 As the recent discovery and excavation of the slave graveyard in New York City affirmed, the north had its skeletons as well. Bill Kirtis, *Slavery's Buried Past*, 60 min. (Chicago, Ill.: Public Media Video, 1990), videocassette.
marriage of land and blood, of property, family, supporters, and friends—a rich foundation for community.

One of the most fascinating waves of black travelers contained individuals whose lives were consumed by an impassioned quest for the divine: Black Holiness-Pentecostal, members of the “Sanctified Church.” 22 Their shared search for a “deeper life in Christ” fostered the creation of a intriguing network of interdependent spiritual narratives of migration, movement, exile and return. The journey of AAP pioneers transcended one or more of the conventional social boundaries, e.g., race, class, gender, region, and religion, and required moving beyond the cultural limits of their “Babelian” spiritual heritage.23

22 As Cheryl Townsend Gilkes notes, the term “Sanctified” is the description used within the black community to refer to black Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic groups.
23 The symbolic beginning and end of black Pentecosatalism is perhaps best described as a pilgrimage from Babel to Transcendant Babel. Taking part in the journey requires movement away from the boundaries of secular ingenuity, division, and non-communication toward spiritual unity, equality, and inclusion.

In the Old Testament account of Babel, language and place are the unifying principles. Without them, the people succumb to confusion and misunderstanding. Their progress is hindered by a lack of communication. Interestingly enough, God orders the confusion because men have collectively attempted to transcend through human agency. Rather impolitely, they do not ask for an invitation to heaven, but simply plan to get there on their own:

(1) And the whole earth, was of one language, and of one speech. (2) And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.... (4) And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth....(9)...Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of the earth: and form thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Aware of the divinity fused in his creation, God knew that the only way to thwart their progress was to interrupt communication. The lack of communication led to a scattering of the people to regions throughout the earth. The people no longer understood, no longer loved each other. Consequently they gave in to a desire to dominate, conquer, and devour.

In the New Testament in Revelation 7: 9—12 a “converted,” “transcendant” Babel emerges:

(9) After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; (10) And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb; (11) And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God:(12) Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Here all are in a place of spiritual transcendence so complete that even while they are uniformly dressed in robes that no doubt represent righteousness, they all maintain their distinct post-Babelian languages and ethnicities. Yet they have a unified message and have come to the same conclusion: Salvation to our God
Black men and women of Methodist and Baptist descent, influenced by white men and women, born and raised in states old and new—their interrelated experiences suggested that unity and diversity were hardly oppositional although societal codes of the time eventually insisted that they be. For while each pioneer maintained his/her distinct identity, each was motivated by the same desire to further authenticate his/her religious experience. Each was willing to reenact individual versions of Old and New Testament exoduses and separations. The Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Christian departures from chosen and forced bondages were engaged in their effort to accomplish their individual and divine purposes, even when doing so required traveling abroad to Texas—for many an “utmost part of the earth.”

The history of Black Pentecostals, particularly of the Church of God in Christ, reflected this complex meshing of kinship and property, one that was effectively nourished by the twentieth-century black community’s general reverence for “chosen” people and “sacred” places. The political implications inherent in their interpretation proved to be important in the latter twentieth century. Similar to black Methodists and Baptists of the region, black Pentecostals saw in the Southwest a unique opportunity to establish not only a “royal priesthood,” but also “holy nation,” a religio-cultural network of family members, friends, and converts. While many of their early-twentieth-century contemporaries privileged the quest for material wealth, the “saints” determined to include the “Power of the Holy Ghost, and that with a mighty burning fire.” Yet the quest for spiritual power did not negate their desire to share in or appreciate the general American quest for tangible goods, e.g., “better homes, larger opportunities” or for the intangible

which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.” Black Pentecostalism, therefore, does not seek to elide differences but rather to appreciate them, for difference is divine.

25Saints often use this phrase in their testimonies: “I thank the Lord for Jesus, for saving me, filling me with the precious Holy Ghost and that with a mighty burning fire!” William A. Savage, Blacks in the West, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976) 196—199. Some African Americans were also motivated by the freedom in the west to marry interracially.
effects that had managed to elude blacks for centuries on end: "kindlier treatment" coupled with "moral, industrial, and political freedom."

Even though their dedication to invoking spiritual power precipitated a social separation from other black Christians in the South, particularly those aspiring to white acceptance and western cultural norms, black Pentecostals did not seek to establish a distinct geographical community in which to nurture their beliefs as did the Mormons in the late nineteenth-century. Nor did they seek a permanent return to Africa, although some did conduct evangelistic work in the so-called "Dark Continent." America was their continent of choice although dominant social forces suggested that such was not the case. Accordingly, black Pentecostals used their socio-spiritual separation to effectuate proto-liberationist interpretation of the Bible, one that permitted embracing the spiritual and the secular. For like all Americans, adherents sought cheap land to build new homes and memories. At the same time they were careful to "work out" or "dig out" churches in one city after the other, to construct "holy" places where "[their] sons and daughters could prophecy, [their] old men could see visions, and [their] young men could dream dreams." (Joel 2:28) The cauldron of creativity and expression that their churches provided was invaluable given the oppressive social climate permeating the Post-Reconstruction Southwest.

A review of their history suggests that black Pentecostals of the early twentieth century did not lament their existential challenge. Given their biblical mandate to "endure hardness as good soldiers" and to "praise Him in the midnight hour," 26 they braced themselves to endure the social, political, spiritual, and economic opposition that

---

26 Perhaps they were encouraged by the experiences of COGIC founder Charles H. Mason who was not only imprisoned for his beliefs, but targeted by the FBI. See I.C. Clemmons "Charles Harrison Mason" printed in Burgess's Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements.
face them throughout much of the twentieth century. Such spiritual tenacity they believed was an inherent trait of the “saved” and “sanctified.”

---

27 The term “Sanctified” is the description used within the black community to refer to Holiness-Pentecostal churches.
Chapter 2: Merging People and Places: Pre-Azusa Pioneers in the Southwest

The African American Pentecostal church, often referred to as the "Sanctified Church" in the black community,¹ arose during the Reconstruction in response to Post-Civil war changes within the black community. At least three separate but interrelated impulses engendered its formation: nineteenth-century perfectionist Christianity; the will to power (black Post-Civil War proto-liberationism); and early twentieth-century ecumenicalism.

The early Pentecostal appreciation for perfectionist Christianity was rooted in Wesleyan Methodism with its emphasis on holiness and sanctification; however, the antislavery stance prompted by the perfectionist agenda meant that the call for "holiness" gradually took on a politico-religious life of its own. The underlying political aegis characteristic of early Pentecostalism is readily symbolized in the life and mission of Sojourner Truth, nineteenth black activist/evangelist/pentecostal.² No doubt the antislavery position inherent in nineteenth-century perfectionism attracted Southern African American protestants, who eventually witnessed the Southern Methodist and Baptist churches part company with the national denominations over the issue of black enslavement. Although interpreted as cultural backwardness by the prevailing religious establishment, the spirited worship style of twentieth-century Pentecostals constituted a radicalizing preservationist act. Even though black pentecostals desired to "uplift the race" like most African Americans of the Reconstruction period, they refused to let the drive for upward mobility override spiritual concerns, especially when prosperity and social acceptance continued to elude many blacks despite their academic preparation.

² Nell Painter argues that Truth's version of perfectionism can be described as "pentecostal" although the term was not coined until the twentieth century. See Nell Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 4 and 293.
Thus among Southern blacks, the Holiness-Pentecostal movement served three important functions: (1) it provided an unprecedented cultural context for legitimizing the African-derived liturgy of plantation praises houses, one of the few positive recollections that former slaves thought worthy of passing on to their free children; (2) it furnished a proto-liberationist foundation for withstanding socio-political oppression, for while the first call for "freedom in worship" may have repelled blacks seeking western social acceptance, the second opportunity for "politico-religious freedom" transcended denominational affiliation;\(^\text{3}\) and (3) it supported ecumenicalism without reserve, radical political idea in a region where racial separatism permeated every stratum of life.

The tripartite call for perfectionism, ecumenicalism, and empowerment is clearly evident in the lives and missions of early Southwestern Pentecostal pioneers. A close look at them and their constituents through the fresh perspective provided by new materials reveals nothing less than people determined to define themselves according to their own terms and to construct for themselves a belief system and a religio-political infrastructure that were both reflective of, and sympathetic to, their own socio-spiritual needs. Despite early pioneers having been born slaves or the children of slaves, they possessed a sense of self-worth and of divine justice so strong that they had little problem taking their spiritual mission to heart, one that permeated their lives to the very end. Contrary to what much of the earlier scholarship on black Pentecostalism suggests, mediocrity was hardly institionalized among them. Recent scholarship and recovered materials affirm that black Holiness-Pentecostal worshippers took meager means and

\(^{3}\) Among the black Southern prelates migrating to this new spiritual field were Henry Lee Fisher (1874-1947), the leader of the United Holy Church of America (founded 1886) in Method, North Carolina; Charles Prince Jones (1865-1949), the founder and leader of the Church of Christ (Holiness) USA (1894-96) in Jackson, Mississippi; Charles Harrison Mason (1866-1961), the founder and leader of the Church of God in Christ (founded in 1896-97) in Lexington, Mississippi; William Edward Fuller (1875-1958), the founder and leader of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church (founded in 1898) which separated from the white organization baring the same name and founded by Benjamin Hardin Irwin in Georgia; and Judge King (1872-1945), the founder and leader of Christ Sanctified Holy Church (founded in 1892) and lead by Joseph B. Lynch. Found in E. Myron Noble, "Introduction," copyright 1989, printed in \textit{Like As of Fire: Newspapers From The Azusa Street World Wide Revival}. Collected by Fred T. Corum & Rachel A. Harper Sizelove, edited by E. Myron Noble (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1993, 1997) ix.
limited access to political power and created a vibrant, inclusive world for themselves and their children. Among COGICs in particular, this peculiar theosphere grew from six (6) upstanding African-American men in 1907 to 8 million men, women, and children from throughout the United States of America in 1997. Texas was a perfect vantage point for plotting the spiritual transition from Holiness to Pentecostalism, and Houston was a likely city. Both permitted saints to embrace both spiritual and social progress.

Among African Americans in Houston, Holiness-Pentecostalism started in the late 1800s with the pioneering work of both independent and organized Holiness pastors. One pioneer in particular played a significant role in the story’s unfolding in the Southwest: Frederick Douglass’s niece, Evangelist/Pastor/Missionary Lucy Farrow. A former slave in Norfolk, Virginia, Farrow pastored a small Holiness church in Houston. Like Jack Yates who had migrated to the Bayou City from Virginia and established Antioch Missionary Baptist Church shortly thereafter, Farrow may have been attracted to the Texas by the railroads’ on-going advertisement campaign. As plantation owners attempted to solve their Post-Emancipation black labor shortage, publicists welcomed immigrants to the “land of opportunity.” Even if writers intended to attract immigrants of non-African descent, blacks moving into the state would certainly have been attracted by one almanac’s claims that Texas promised “the protection of individual rights, regardless of race, creed, color or nationality,” or by its avowal that “Texas extend[ed] the right hand of fellowship to all the States and invit[ed] within her borders the good and true from earth’s remotest bounds.” The opportunity touted was attractive to those, who like Farrow, were interested in establishing churches as well. While Farrow no doubt drew on the spiritual teachings of other evangelists, it is certain that two traveling preachers in particular—one black and the other white— influenced her spiritual development like

---

none others: William J. Seymour of Centerville, Louisiana, and Charles Fox Parham of Topeka, Kansas.

Farrow welcomed William J. Seymour to preach at her Houston church. When Seymour arrived in Houston, he had already spent many years searching for a higher spiritual experience. Born in Centerville, Louisiana, on May 2, 1870, to former slaves Simon and Phillis Seymour, Seymour had experiences throughout his childhood and early adulthood that sparked a quest to embrace spirituality beyond his Baptist teachings. Leaving Louisiana to initiate his search, Seymour migrated to Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1895, where he worked as a waiter in an exclusive restaurant and joined a local black congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Still seeking spiritual resolve, Seymour then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he resided from 1900 to 1902. While in Cincinatti he encountered the Holiness movement through the "God’s Revivalist" movement founded by white revivalist Martin Wells Knapp (1853 - 1901). Seymour accepted the Holiness emphasis on entire sanctification and joined the Church of God Reformation movement, also known as the "Evening Light Saints." Founded in 1880 by Daniel S. Warner (1853-1985), the church was headquartered in Anderson, Indiana, and stressed the probability of a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the rapture of the church, i.e., the divinely ordained transportation of the church to heaven, an event that Pentecostals believe will precede the second coming of Christ.⁵

During Seymour’s stay in Indianapolis, he contracted smallpox and consequently lost the use of his left eye. During his convalescence, Seymour accepted a call to preach and was licensed and ordained as a minister of the “Evening Light Saints” movement shortly thereafter. Still a man on the move, in 1903 Seymour moved to Houston, Texas, in search of his biological family. It was here that he met Lucy Farrow and attended her church and preached at her request.

As Farrow and Seymour preached the holiness message in Houston, both eventually learned of a white minister from Topeka, Kansas, Charles Parham who conducted revivals throughout the state of Texas and who had added to the holiness message one of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps Farrow and Seymour were aware that Parham’s Easter Sunday message of 1905 in Orchard marked the advent of Pentecost in the state of Texas. Their interest in his ministry must have grown by the time Parham returned to Houston July 10, 1905, along with 24 workers, to conduct a revival there. So popular were Parham’s revival services that people started to come to Houston from neighboring cities to experience their individual pentecosts. In accord with the fervor, several Apostolic Faith churches were established in the ever-expanding suburban areas of Houston. Parham eventually took his message to Galveston, Texas, where he conducted a successful revival during the fall of 1905.

Due to the explosive popularity of Parham’s theme and to Lucy Farrow’s urgent request, Farrow, Parham and Seymour, three great pioneers of Holiness-Pentecostal theology and practice, met with each other under more structured circumstances although Jim Crow laws shaped and even limited the context of their mingling. Parham taught a ten-week session at his Houston Bible Training School in December 1905 near the center of town at 503 Rusk Street. The evangelist opened the school as a faith ministry and therefore did not charge fees or tuition. Despite his magnanimity in this regard, Parham’s spiritual awakening did not transcend his racially conservative disposition. As he had done during revivals and school sessions in Topeka, Kansas, Parham supported the segregationist customs of the time. Just as blacks had sat to the rear of his in- or outdoor meetings in Topeka, Kansas, so did they during his revivals throughout the southeast and west. Thus when Parham opened his Houston school, William J. Seymour, eventual

---


7 There Parham and other students were baptized in the Holy Spirit within a year of Agnes M. Ozman, who in 1901 was the first in Parham’s school to be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Notwithstanding its designation, “for whites only,” the school became the first site in the United States from which the advent of the Holy Spirit was connected to subsequent outpourings. Found in E.
catalyst for the worldwide Azusa Street Revival, listened to proceedings in the hallway while Lucy Farrow, the pastor/missionary/evangelist/cook, prepared hot meals for the faculty and student body as they concentrated on spiritual enrichment. Yet Farrow and Seymour bore with the segregationist codes of their day in search of a more profound religious experience.9

Once the Houston school session closed, each of the pioneers left Houston to pursue both secular and spiritual missions in various parts of the country and world, although Farrow and Seymour were still seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Upon Parham's request, Farrow served as the governess of the Parham family during the summer. When Farrow returned to Houston, she received the desired baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Seymour, who traveled to Los Angeles on an invitation from Neely Terry who had visited him in Houston, did not experience baptism in the Holy Spirit until he found a place willing to receive him and his message. The Asberry home in California constituted the place. In April 1906, there at 214 Bonnie Brae Street,

---


After Farrow received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Houston, an event which preceded her return from Topeka, Kansas where she worked at Parham's governess, Farrow headed for Norfolk, Virginia. Before she started her journey, she laid hands on about 25 people, prayed for the sick, and shared her testimony. En route to Norfolk, she preached in New Orleans, LA as well. Upon her arrival in Virginia, Farrow initiated a series of meetings in Portsmouth. By the close of the meetings, 150 people had received the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” and approximately were saved as a result of her Portsmouth campaign. In December 1906 Farrow extended her missionary call to Monrovia, Liberia, a city governed by expatriated American slaves. Feeling that she had a spiritual work to do in Africa, Farrow sent a message to Azusa requesting a replacement in Portsmouth and initiated her mission. Farrow stopped in New York where she met with G.W. Batmans; Julia W. Hutchins; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel J. Mead; and the Shidlers, who were on their way from Azusa to Liberia. Also with them was Mr. F. M. Cook, who was baptized in the spirit when the revived group laid hands on him. While in New York, they participated in two weeks of meetings that were being conducted by a group of missionaries. At the close of the meetings, the Meads and Shidlers journeyed to Bengilela, Liberia, and the others traveled on to Monrovia via Liverpool, England, arriving in Liberia in late December. Farrow eventually settled in Johnsonville, Liberia twenty-five miles from Monrovia where she preached and ministered for eight months (until August). While there Farrow reported that many were converted, sanctified and healed. Twenty of the converts were “baptized” in the Holy Spirit. Farrow returned to Azusa during the latter part of 1907 by way of Virginia and the South, preaching and praying along the way. In November she held meetings in Littleton, North Carolina for an Apostolic mission in the area. When Farrow finally returned to Azusa, she continued to minister from a small “faith cottage” located behind the mission. Those who visited her “faith cottage” reported being either headed, baptized in the Spirit or filled even more with the Spirit.

6 Noble, ix.
Seymour catalyzed the Azusa Street Revival during which he eventually experienced glossalalia. Hearing of the California happenings, Farrow visited Seymour’s revival in Los Angeles in September 1906 along with J.A. Warren, also of Houston.\textsuperscript{10} She then left the United States to conduct missionary work in Johnsonville, Liberia, in December of the same year.

Meanwhile, Parham too left Houston, reaching the pinnacle of his popularity by the mid-year with some 13,000 Pentecostal converts to his credit by 1907.\textsuperscript{11} He then named himself “Projector” of the Pentecostal movement and traveled to Zion City, Illinois to secure that city as a Pentecostal capital.\textsuperscript{12} But his attempt was unsuccessful. A backlash to Parham’s authority forced him to establish a mission apart from Zion. His rival, Wilbur Glenn Voliva, heir to John Alexander Dowie, maintained control of the movement in Illinois. Not long after Parham’s failed attempt, his popularity began to plummet. Parham experienced an irrevocable descent into near spiritual oblivion in the summer of 1907 when he was arrested in San Antonio, Texas, and charged with sodomy. Interestingly enough, rumors of Parham’s reputation surfaced late in 1906, the selfsame moment of his undoing as Pentecostal leader.\textsuperscript{13} Although Texas authorities dropped the charges without explanation, the damage to Parham’s character had been done. His opponent, Wilbur Voliva publicized news of the disconsolate leader’s downfall. Adversely affected by the scandal, Parham spent the final two decades of his life exiled from the greater part of the Apostolic movement he had begun.

While Parham was waging and even losing his claims on the Apostolic Faith movement in Illinois, William Seymour contemplated a journey to California. William Seymour initiated his spiritual narrative as he traveled from one state to the other in search of a power that would permit him to speak in unknown tongues—liberating him

\textsuperscript{10} The Apostolic Faith, Los Angeles, California, September 1906, Vol. 1, No. 1, page 1.
\textsuperscript{11} Noble, ix.
\textsuperscript{12} Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, 661.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
and others from the confines of conventional language and granting them private yet shared audience with the divine. He did not find the power he sought in totality until he had reached an appropriate place—Los Angeles, “the city of angels.”

He acted on the invitation of Neely Terry, a young woman from a Holiness church in Los Angeles who had visited him in Houston and eventually welcomed him to visit her California congregation with the possibility of becoming pastor. The church, which was connected with the Southern California Holiness Association, was founded and pastored by Julia W. Hutchins.\textsuperscript{14} Seymour agreed, and on his way to Los Angeles, he resided in the Pillar of Fire headquarters in Denver, led by Alma White. In his first sermon in Los Angeles, Seymour preached on Acts 2:4, and to the chagrin of Pastor Hutchins, he announced the necessity of speaking in other tongues as evidence of the Pentecostal experience. Because of opposition from the Holiness Association to glossolalia as the legitimating evidence of conversion, Hutchins locked the church door, and Seymour was forced to find refuge in the home of another church member, Richard Asberry, on Bonnie Brae Avenue.

After several weeks of prayer meetings in the Asberry home, Seymour and others received the tongues experience, an event that sparked an intense revival. For a time, services were held on the front porch, where Seymour preached to crowds gathered in the streets. As the numbers increased, larger quarters were need than the building at 312 Azusa Street which had functioned at different moments in history as a stable, warehouse, and Methodist Episcopal church.\textsuperscript{15}

On April 14, 1906, Seymour conducted his first service on Azusa Street. On April 18, the day of the San Francisco earthquake, the first report in the \textit{Los Angeles Times} spoke of “a weird babble of tongues” amid “wild scenes” in the mission. By May

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, 780.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}
more than a thousand persons pressed to enter the small 40-by-60-foot mission to witness scenes that allegedly mirrored those of Cane Ridge a century earlier. The central attraction at Azusa Street, however, was glossolalia.\textsuperscript{16}

Because Seymour recognized Parham as his "spiritual father" and the "projector of the movement," he invited Parham to hold a "union revival" in October 1906. When Parham arrived, however, he was repelled the noisy demonstrations and the perceived influence of spiritualists\textsuperscript{17} in the meetings. His attempts to exert authority over the gatherings alienated Seymour and his followers. Parham and Seymour severed irreparable ties when Parham was rejected by the Azusa Street elders. Yet the revival continued to gain momentum. Seymour then incorporated his ministry as the Pacific Apostolic Faith Movement in 1907 and began publication of a periodical titled the \textit{Apostolic Faith}, which eventually attracted 50,000 subscribers, many of whom lived outside the US.

Eventually, visitors from throughout the nation and abroad journeyed to Los Angeles to experience Pentecost. Among the Azusa Street pilgrims were William H. Durham and John C. Sinclair, who brought the Pentecostal message back to Chicago; G.B. Cashwell, who spread the message in the Holiness churches of the Southeast; and other important American pilgrims including Rachel Sizelove, Glenn Cook, D.W. Kerr, and Marie Burgess. Among those in the "seeking" crowd was a fiery black Holiness preacher from Memphis, Tennessee who became one of the first to provide an ecclesiastical structure for communicating this fresh spiritual experience: Charles Harrison Mason of the Church of God in Christ.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{17} While Pentecostals encouraged spirituality, which they define as communication with God through prayer, supplication, and praise, they renounced "spiritualism." That is, communication with the dead through a medium. Scriptural support for their position is found in I Samuel ( ).
\textsuperscript{18} According to an essay by I.C. Clemmons, printed in the \textit{Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements}, Charles Harrison Mason (1866-1961), founder of the Church of God in Christ, was "one of the most significant figures in the rise and spread of the modern Pentecostal movement...Mason said he prayed earnestly that God would give him "above all things a religious like the one he had heard about from the old slaves and seen demonstrated in their lives."" This heartfelt desire became the theme for his life.
Mason penned his personal testimony of Holy Spirit baptism during the Azusa meeting, printed in the February-March 1907 issue of The Apostolic Faith. The Tennessee evangelist wrote:

I had a false interpretation in my heart concerning the speaking in tongues. I did not take it literally as I did, “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” For years God had given me the knowledge of healing, and he had marvelously wrought with me and many cases of disease had been delivered. I interpreted the speaking in tongues to mean that we left off blaspheming, etc. But when I got to the place where, hungering and thirsting for God, I consented to His Word, I saw that we did not need that interpretation, that the only reason we were not enjoying the speaking in tongues was because we did not accept it. Then I felt I had gone to the end of myself. I had the care of a pastor over many flocks far and near and yet was so hungry and thirsty. The Lord showed me the humility of Jesus. How He came and presented Himself for baptism with the rest. I saw that I should not be above my Master. If He needed the Holy Ghost, I needed it to do the will of God, and Jesus would give me a better consolation to my own heart.  

Mirroring the spiritual journey from humility to complete transcendence common among those who professed baptism of the Holy Spirit, Mason continued:

As I arose from the altar and took my seat, I fixed my eyes on Jesus, and the Holy Ghost took charge of me. I surrendered perfectly to Him and consented to Him. Then I began singing a song in unknown tongues, and it was the sweetest thing to have Him sing that song through me. He had complete charge of me. I let Him have my mouth and everything.... He lifted me to my feet and then the light of heaven fell upon me and burst into me filling me. Then God took charge of my tongue and I went to preaching in tongues. I could not change my tongue. The glory of God filled the temple. The gestures of my hands and movements of my body were His. O it was marvelous and I thank God for giving it to me in His way. Such an indescribable peace and quietness went all through my flesh and into my very brain and has been there ever since. 

---

19 The Apostolic Faith, February-March, 1907, Volume 1, No. 6, page 7.
20 Ibid.
Despite the depth of Mason’s experience, he too, like Parham, faced a crisis upon his return home, although for a different reason. Parham was exiled for alleged wrong-doing, and Mason for his preaching “strange” Pentecostal beliefs. Mason’s experience provides rich entry into the immediate post-Azusa black Pentecostal experience. Mason’s Church of God in Christ eventually set the tone for post-Azusa Holiness-Pentecostalism throughout the state of Texas until the post World War II Latter Rain Movement rose to challenge its hegemony among black Holiness-Pentecostal worshippers.
Chapter 3: Charles Mason and Early Southwestern Pioneers

Lucy Farrow, Charles Parham, and William J. Seymour represented the national Pentecostal movement, and Charles H. Mason spearheaded an effective network for its eventual communication among African Americans throughout the Southwest. Charles Mason, COGIC bishops, church mothers, and missionary evangelists alike set out to heed New Testament mandates to “go out into the highways and byways” and to “go into the vineyard and work.” Each charge lent content and form to their exilic experience while welcoming their new inclination to re-explore, re-define, and re-interpret.\(^1\) Constructing churches, educating their children, and making creative use of meager means, they effectively problematize the well-worn description of black Pentecostals as poor, ignorant, and otherworldly. As they moved southwestward, they also challenged the historical northern/southern binary that dominated academic discourse well into the twentieth century. The perspectival shift they initiated warrants consideration.

As with William Seymour, Charles Mason’s spiritual narrative started in his early childhood with a praying mother who spoke often of how the slaves worshipped God fervently in plantation “praise houses.” Already Mason distinguished himself from his contemporaries by actively seeking to preserve an element of slave culture that most others sought to discard. According to I.C. Clemmons, Mason prayed for “above all

\(^1\) For the millions of blacks the universe was riddled with Morrisonian irony. They seemed to be living a metaphorical reversal of the New Testament “Prodigal Son.” In the biblical story, the son requested his portion, left home with money in his pockets, spent his substance, and eventually ate with the hogs—a sign of moral and socio-economic bankruptcy. He returned with a repentant heart to a loving father who upon seeing him from afar off, ran to kiss him, had servants kill the fatted calf and prepare a feast for the son’s return. Blacks in twentieth-century America were characters in a reverse drama “The Prodigal Father”: an abusive paternalistic system thrust millions of them into the modern age while denying them not only their portion but their heritage and much of their land. When they returned to request what was rightfully theirs, the father begrudgingly handed out scraps of power and placating recognition—only to save face in front of the neighbors whom he had been busy convincing of his selfless generosity. Black sons and daughters then crystallized their ever-growing desire to find a new father, an enlightened Paternity, one so accessible and constant that they could “call Him up and tell him what [they] want[ed]” on a moment’s notice. Finding “a Friend in Jesus” they vowed forever to “hold onto [His father’s] unchanging hand.”
things a religion like the one he had heard about from the old slaves and seen demonstrated their lives. 2

Mason was clearly ahead of his time. Even while W. E. B. Du Bois encouraged black writers to record the passing cadences of the “Negro” preacher, most black intellectuals of the early-to-mid twentieth century found little if anything worth preserving of the African American’s enslaved past. No systematic valuation of slave culture among African American theologians occurred among black members of the academy until the post-civil rights period. While James Cone’s Black Theology initiated a dramatic move toward a theology that privileged the spiritual needs of the oppressed, the particular use of slave narratives as a source for constructive black theology was not thoroughly articulated until Dwight Hopkins’s and George C. G. Cummings’s Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue (1991), a collection of essays championing the use of slave spirituals, slave autobiographies, and narratives as solid matter for understanding the African American’s historical interpretation of the Christian god. 3 Hopkins argues that while “slaves sang songs to heaven during backbreaking work in the cotton and sugarcane fields, or even as they drove ‘Massa’ in his buggy from plantation…the most concentrated worship space was found in the ‘Invisible Institution’ 4—the illegal and concealed slave gatherings where full singing, dancing, preaching, praying, and shouting were offered as testimonies to what the Lord had done for black people in bondage…Out of this richly layered new reality called the African American community, crafted by the slaves themselves, we find a fresh way of understanding the relation between an oppressed people’s belief in God and God’s covenant of grace and freedom for God’s faithful.” 5

---


3 Dwight N. Hopkins and George Cummings, Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books) X.

4 The term “Invisible Institution” is one that scholars use to describe the clandestine worship services of Antebellum African American slaves.

5 Ibid.
Mason’s appreciation for the slaves’ spiritual reality notwithstanding, his quest for a deeper religious experience plummeted in 1893 when he and his first wife divorced. After overcoming a bout with depression prompted by his deep sense of personal loss, Mason set out to educate himself. One of the manuscripts that inspired him and other blacks throughout the nation was published the same year by Meyer and Brothers: *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord’s Dealing with Mrs. Amanda Smith, The Coloured Evangelist*. A discipline of John Inskip, Amanda Smith (1839-1915) became one of the most respected black Holiness evangelists of the nineteenth century. Her life story inspired many blacks to embrace the Holiness movement, including Mason. After reading Smith’s autobiography, Mason claimed divine sanctification and preached his first sermon on Holiness in Preston, Arkansas. He used 2 Timothy 3:12-13 as his text: “Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”—one remained with him throughout his life.6

On November 1, 1893, Mason enrolled in Arkansas Baptist College, founded by Dr. E. C. Morris, pastor of Centennial Baptist Church at Helena, Arkansas, and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Mason was disturbed by the new higher criticism that Dr. C. L. Fisher, a top graduate of Morgan Park Seminary (now the University of Chicago Divinity School) had brought to Arkansas Baptist College. He had both hermeneutical and cultural suspicions of the methods, philosophy, and curriculum at the college. He came to the personal conclusion that for the school would be of no help in his task of preserving the vitality of slave religion. He left there in January 1894.7

In 1895 Mason met Charles Price Jones, newly elected pastor of the Mt. Helms Baptist Church at Jackson, Mississippi. Jones was a graduate of Arkansas Baptist College. Like Mason, Jones was influenced by the Holiness movement and in 1894 claimed the experience of sanctification while pastoring Tabernacle Baptist Church at

---


Selma, Alabama. By preaching sanctification as a second definite work of grace subsequent to conversion, Mason and Jones created small stir among black Baptists. From 1896-99, the Holiness conventions, revivals, and periodicals of Mason and Jones, and their colleagues were vehemently opposed and eventually expelled from the Baptist churches (the National Baptist Convention). After fervent praying and studying of the Scripture to ascertain how to guide these independent “sanctified” congregations, Mason received the revelation of the name, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (I Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:1) while walking along a street in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was during this pensive stroll in 1897 that a major new black denomination was born. From the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century most blacks had encountered Christianity through Baptist or Methodist churches. Mason and Jones changed the religious landscape in the black community and broadened the black religious experience. Owing to Mason’s dynamic preaching and Jones’s prolific writings and hymnology, Sanctified (Holiness) churches were established throughout the South and Southwest bearing the name Church of God in Christ.8

After having started the new work, Mason sought to consecrate himself even more. In 1906, he heard news of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles through one of his church mothers, and decided to take part in the experience. During William J. Seymour’s famed revival, Mason received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. After spending five weeks in Los Angeles, Mason returned to Memphis and Jackson eager to share his additional religious experience. When he presented the Pentecostal message to the church, however, both he and his message were rejected. After days and nights of intense debate, Mason and Jones separated, and the church split. Yet Mason maintained a lasting allegiance to Jones and to the black Baptist church. Mason’s COGIC contemporaries—Elder J.A. Jeter, the General Overseer, Elder C. P. Jones, and others—believed his experience with glossalalia to be delusional. Because Mason would

---

not be persuaded to renounced his convictions, the General Assembly of COGIC responded by expelling him from the organization during their meeting in Jackson, Mississippi in August 1907. Determined to institutionalize what he believed to be an authentic religious experience, Mason then called a conference in Memphis, Tennessee, inviting ministers who shared his beliefs to attend. Those who agreed with Mason met in September 1907 to reorganize the COGIC. Among the respondents were E.R. Driver, J. Bowe, R.R. Booker, R.E. Hart, W. Welsh, A.A. Blackwell, E.M. Page, R.H.I. Clark, D.J. Young, James Brewer, Daniel Spearman, and J.H. Boone. The men elected Mason as general overseer and appointed D. J. Young, Mason’s constant companion, as editor of the new periodical, *The Whole Truth*.

Once gathered, the men organized the first “Pentecostal General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ” and unanimously elected Mason as General Overseer and Chief Apostle of the denomination. Vested with full authority over the organization, Mason made the following original appointments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. Hart</th>
<th>Tennessee</th>
<th>Elder E. M. Page</th>
<th>Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elder J.A. Lewis</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Elder R.R. Booker</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder J. Bowe</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Elder E.R. Driver</td>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elder B. Holt—National Field Secretary

Through this meeting a structured avenue for the Pentecostal movement was be established in the south- and midwest. Revivalistic campaigns along the far-eastern and northeastern seaboard would follow quickly thereafter. A spiritually empowered (Holy-Ghost filled) Church of God in Christ in Houston, Texas, was helping to pave the way. To prepare for the envisioned structure, Mason organized four major church departments

---

9 Alferd Z. Hall, Jr., *So You Want to Know Your Church* (Memphis, Tennessee: Zannju Publication 1996), 12.
between 1910 and 1916: (1) the Women's Department; (2) Sunday School; (3) Young People's Willing Workers; (4) Home and Foreign Mission.  

COGIC reached Texas the same year the organization celebrated its official birth date — 1907, only one year after Seymour, Farrow, and Parham had met at Parham's Bible School at 503 Rusk Street. Mason commissioned men and women throughout the Southwest to establish COGIC churches and oversee their spiritual growth. Even though Mason's spiritual father William Seymour returned to Houston after the initial outbreak of the Azusa revival that Seymour had catalyzed, no record has been found that details Seymour's whereabouts. Nor is it known what eventually befell Lucy Farrow's church after she returned from Africa and headed home to preach in Virginia. Historical evidence does affirm, however, that the following individuals fostered the spirited dissemination of the Pentecostal message throughout the state: the second bishop of Texas and Oklahoma, Bishop E. M. Page (Dallas); Page's assistant, J. Houston Galloway (Houston, Texas); and Hannah Chandler, the first COGIC Mother of Texas (Dallas).

Bishop Page made a concerted effort to stabilize COGIC in Texas, emphasizing the importance of education and the printed word. Under his administration, both a school and a monthly magazine were established. The Page Normal Industrial and Bible Institute was constructed in Hearne, Texas. As the name of the school suggests, the COGIC organization respected the dual pursuit of spiritual excellence and secular

---

10 "A Brief Historical, Doctrinal and Structural Report on 'The Church of God in Christ.' 2.
11 According to the Year Book of the Church of God in Christ For the Year 1926. Because of Young's having proven himself to be a productive minister, Mason appointed him first overseer of Texas. Young had distinguished himself by pastoring in Pine Bluff, Arkansas for seven years and by establishing a church in Beaumont, Texas where the membership mushroomed from fifty to two hundred fifty members. After functioning in his appointed capacity for "a while," Young resigned from his position. Mason then appointed E. M. Page (74), the bishop most credited with moving Texas forward. Nevertheless, Young continued to make contributions to the COGIC organization. He began to conduct revivals in the northern U.S. In 1916, he journeyed to Kansas City where he established a church. Described as "very successful" in his efforts, he was appointed overseer of Kansas. But he was forced to resign for health reasons. In the spring of 1916, Mason appointed Young to oversee COGIC publications and to manage the organization's Sunday School literature.
12 Ibid., 137.
achievement. Page touted his accomplishments in a letter to the Yearbook of the Church of God in Christ For the Year 1926:

The Lord, through my earnest labor with my brethren, has brought the work from twelve churches to more than one hundred churches in these eleven years. Many thousand souls have been saved, church houses built, 268 acres of the school land bought and paid for, and the school erected. I am glad to say Texas produced good preachers and well trained men, which shows for itself. I have held eleven State Convocations and raise $18,308.58. Eighteen thousand three hundred and eight dollars and fifty-eight cents. And in 1925 we raised for the State $10,150.70. Ten thousand one hundred fifty dollars and seventy cents, making a grand total of $38,825.19. Thirty-eight thousand, eight hundred and twenty-five dollars and nineteen cents. Thank the Lord for all He had done for us. I have not looked for myself, I have looked for the people.  

Page was pleased with progress in Texas, especially given that he did not wish to move to the region initially:

In the latter part of 1913, the Lord, through Elder C. H. Mason, our Chief Apostle, called me to go to Texas. It hurt me so bad to think of going to Texas, but after humbling myself before the Lord for five hours in prayer, He spoke to my soul and I said: “Yes, Lord!” Not one moment did I resist any more. In January, 1914, I left Memphis for Texas. Arrived in Dallas on the 27th, met the Church that night and they received me gladly.

Wholeheartedly embracing his administrative duties, Page established steady communication among affiliate churches through The Texas Bulletin, a monthly COGIC magazine of the Texas Jurisdiction printed in San Antonio, Texas, and mailed to subscribers throughout the region. Although published “in the interest of Christian religion and Christian education,” the July 1938 issue reaffirms that secular employment made the yearly subscription fee of one dollar affordable to its readership. Two poetic stanzas by Samuel Francis Smith appear in a section titled “From the Editor’s Scrap Book,” both indicating a deliberate effort on the part of publishers to highlight the importance of education and freedom:

---

13 Yearbook, 67.
14 Ibid.
Our glorious Land today
‘Neath Education’s sway,
Soars forward still.
Its halls of learning fair,
Whose Bounties all may share,
Behold ... everywhere,
On vale and hill!

Thy safeguard, Liberty,
The school shall ever be—
Our Nations pride!
No [?] hand shall smite,
While with encircling might,
All hers are taught the
Right,
With Truth allied.  

The publication was used to communicate developments on campus. Readers learned that Page’s assistant, Overseer J. H. Galloway, “gave able instructions and conducted roundtable discussions.” He assured students of his level of preparation, informing them that his “experiences in the Church of God in Christ cover[ed] 27 years....fully warrant[ed] him in making certain admonitions to the ministry.” Instructing ministers on the art of preaching, Galloway posited that “[t]hirty and thirty-five minutes should be the time limit of [their] sermon[s].” According to the writer’s notes, Galloway offered the following practical points on art of preaching:

You should know when to close, and do not close out lower than where you began. Learn to close out in the height of your message. Then, too, learn to build your sermon. Do not start off too rapidly, but gradually build up to your climax, then close.

Galloway continued:

---

16 Ibid. “From the Editor’s Scrap Book,” 2.
17 Texas Bulletin, 3.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
Let's quit boring our people; if we do not, we will not have anybody to bore. Do no shout at your people before and during your sermon. Do not personate. Do not agitate. Fast before or on entering your reival meetings, but not during the time, you need the energy for service. I do not go to my pulpit fasting.\textsuperscript{20}

In addition to teaching at the Institute, preaching, and acting as Page's assistant, Galloway served as President of the National Benevolent Burial Association.\textsuperscript{21} Because of Galloway's legislative skill and longstanding relationship with the Association and with COGIC, COGIC members from "several states" were afforded the opportunity to join the aforementioned entity.

Behind the scenes, but making historic contributions to COGIC in the Lone Star State, Hannah Chandler of Dallas functioned as the first State Mother of Texas. Before joining COGIC, Hannah Chandler was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church. Although her pastor, Reverend N.J. Johnson, taught sanctification and she received her first experience with the same from his teachings, Sister Emma James of Memphis, Tennessee, introduced Chandler to the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" during an evangelistic mission in Dallas, TX, in 1910. Chandler highlighted the novelty of James's message when she candidly admitted, "I had never heard it before."\textsuperscript{22} Recalling James's influence and the excommunication resulting from her experience, Chandler continued:

[Sis. Emma James] expounded it in such a simple way that my poor heart became hungry. She made me to know if I was sanctified I was a candidate for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and began begging God to baptize me with the Holy Ghost and on the first Sunday in March I went back to the M.E. Church baptized with the Holy Ghost and the pastor excluded me and quite naturally, I haven't been an active worker in the church for a number of years. I left a little idle and the Lord called Sister James to go to Tyler, Tex., and I went with her and the Lord

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Yearbook of the Church of God in Christ For the Year 1926}. 64.
\textsuperscript{22}Compiled by Lillian Brooks Coffey, \textit{Year Book of the Church of God in Christ for the Year 1926}, 75. Re-copy of the original print with excerpts by Elder Jerry R. Ramsey, III, 1611, 23rd St., Everett, Wa.
gave us a great field of labor in that town and many souls were saved and added to the Church.\textsuperscript{23}

After teaming up with James to undertake evangelistic work, in 1911 Chandler attended her first state Convocation, held in Little Rock, Arkansas, and her first National Convocation in Memphis, Tennessee. Chandler added:

After the convocation closed we went to Mississippi and worked in the state and in 1912 we [Chandler and James] came back to Memphis, Tenn., to the National Convocation again and when the convocation had closed the deacons of Wellington Street hired me for janitor of the church. I served as janitor for one year, after which, I went back to Texas and worked there until 1914, and in November of 1914 I attended the National Convocation...[A]fter I had gone back home to Texas I was informed by the state overseer, Elder E. M. Page, that I had been appointed by Mother Roberson, Mother of the Women's Work of the State of Texas.\textsuperscript{24}

Surprise but honored by her appointment, Chandler continued:

When I had read the letter, almost unnerved, and I began praying the Lord to give me wisdom so that I might undertake, and when the Lord had given me wisdom how to take hold of the work I went into it with all my heart. At that time [1914] there were only seven or eight churches in the state, but today [1926] we have about 150. I have worked these eleven years with Elder Page and we have not had any trouble at all. We are very glad to say that women's work is well organized in Texas.\textsuperscript{25}

Chandler served in the COGIC until her death in 1944, and was succeeded by Bertha Polk, who worked in that capacity for approximately thirty years.

Texas proved to be fertile ground for the establishment of COGIC churches. By 1926 the COGIC counted approximately 150 ministers; 50 local elders and licensed preachers; and as least four "women evangelistic helpers."\textsuperscript{26} More than 55 Texas cities

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 137—138.
and residential enclaves touted a COGIC connection: Dallas (Oak Cliff); Ft. Worth; Magnolia Addition, Fort Worth and Dallas; Abilene; Rose; Electa; Lincoln Mainor; Jasper-Honey Island; Magnolia Springs; Trinity; Crockett; Nacogdoches; LaGrange; Plum; Clearburn; Hillsboro; Waxahachie; Marshall; Ferris; Beaumont; Houston; Houston-Goosecreek; Houston-3rd Ward; Paris; Fairbanks; Amarillo; Grayburg-Sillsbee; Franklin; Nona; Prairie; Jamerson; Lake Como; Brenham; Bastrop; West Side Palistine; Maypearl; Port Arthur; Garland; Farmersville; Orange; Galveston; Bonham; Dennison; Sulphur Springs; Thuacanna; Blooming Grove; Sylvan; Ennis; Conroe; Bryan and Wichita Falls.  

The “Mother” church of COGIC in Texas is Center Street COGIC (now aptly called “First COGIC”), located in Houston and founded in 1909. Center Street was therefore the first official sanctuary from which the COGIC version of Pentecost was preached. Payne’s Temple of Dallas and an unnamed church in Hillboro vie for second place.

Buck Street Memorial Church of God in Christ in Houston also figures among the earliest COGIC churches in Texas. Buck Street was established in 1913 by William (Billie) Johnson in a “shot-gun” house. Johnson and his congregation purchased a lot at 2917 Buck Street in 1918. The church was constructed in 1921 and dedicated in 1922. Its interracial congregation mushroomed to more than three hundred members under Johnson’s leadership. After Johnson died April 18, 1936, Elder John Gamble, a great Bible historian, was named pastor in August, 1936. During Gamble’s tenure, in 1954 the congregation purchased property on Deschaumes and Legion Streets. In 1956 a handsome edifice large enough to seat 600 was constructed. After Gamble’s death, November 20, 1979, Bishop Chester H. Nelson, Presiding Bishop of Texas South Central Jurisdiction, appointed the Assistant Pastor, Elder Charles A. Harrison, the third pastor.

---

27 Ibid.
28 As was the COGIC tradition according to Earline Allen, Buckstreet Memorial was named after its street address. The church is now located at 3520 Deschaumes in Houston’s Third Ward.
Members of “Buck St. Family” were more than pleased with Bishop Nelson’s choice. Harrison served the church for than thirty years.29

In 1919 Reverend Calvin A. Williams, “a devoted, determined man, filled with ambition. wisdom and the spirit of Christ,” began to establish a church at McGowen and Live Oak Streets then named the “Third Ward Church of God in Christ.” After the original church was burned and refurbished, members worked diligently to keep the church afloat. Among the early members working with Williams were Rev. John Bell, Deacon John Lacour, Mother Curtis,30 Sis. Pricilla Yancy, Sis. Betty Cooper, Sis. Caroline Smith, Sis. Louise Mitchell, Mother Washintgon, Sis. R. Vaughns, Bro. Bennie Roy, The Smiths, Sis. Lula Lee, Sis. Minnie Evans, and Sis. Julia Walker.31 In 1922 the aforementioned members supported the church’s remodeling programs and helped to acquire more property at 2524 Delano Street where present-day Woodard’s Cathedral now stands.32

In 1925 Bishop H.W. Falls (1903-1996), from New Iberia, Louisiana, founded Zion Temple Church of God in Christ in Houston’s historic Fourth Ward. Falls boasted that his church was the first among black Pentecostals containing a balcony.33 Earline Allen, who visited Falls’s church from time to time when she was a newlywed, recalled, “We would have a good time at Bishop Falls’s.” 34 According to Allen, Falls had established an early reputation for letting the saints “praise Him all night long.” Although Falls eventually parted with the COGIC denomination to participate in the Latter Rain Movement of the late 1940s and 1950s, his impact on Houston’s general

30 Mother Curtis’s first name does not appear in the works cited above.
31 William’s Temple Church of God in Christ, Inc.: “Dedicatorial Services for the Opening of the Woodard Cathedral Worship Center,” Sunday January 29, 1989 A.D., 3:00 P.M.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid., Conversation with Missionary Earline Allen, October 27, 1997.
“Sanctified” community cannot be overstated. Falls is the spiritual father and grandfather to many ministries in the Houston area and beyond.35

Pioneering COGIC Women:

Working untiringly with Mason, COGIC women established a precedent for Pentecostal women throughout the state of Texas. Capturing their dedication to women’s work in “Together and in Harness: Women’s Traditions in the Sanctified Church,” Cheryl Townsend Gilkes argues that Mason’s legal separation from his wife may have opened the door for the steady, sustained influence of women in the COGIC:

The founder of the COGIC, divorced from a woman who was still living, could not remarry. His position as an unmarried head of a church was almost unique in black church history, a marked departure from the traditional pattern of a preacher married to a professional woman leader (usually a teacher). This historical “accident” generated the model of a nearly autonomous women’s organization. Mason not only recruited Mother Roberson to head the women’s work but also on her advice appointed women’s overseers along the same jurisdictional and district lines as the male overseers who later became bishops. The title “overseer,” a literal translation of the Greek word usually translated as “bishop,” was used in the early days of the church for both men and women leaders in the church. Such usage implied that the founders of the COGIC and other denominations initially envisioned a church organized in parallel structures of both male and female overseers. This vision was closer to the dual sex political systems characteristic of some West African societies than to the patriarchal episcopal polities of European origin.36

Accordingly, the history of sanctified women is quite distinguished from that of black Baptist women of the National Baptist Convention. In Righteous Discontent (1993). Evelyn Higginbotham contends that the Baptist women’s movement largely developed “apart from” the male-dominated National Baptist Convention:

35 See Appendix for a complete listing of member churches of Falls’s World Wide Fellowship.
The rising prominence of black church women and the flurry of organizational activity on their part occurred squarely within the racial struggle for denominational hegemony. However, women were not content to operate merely within the boundaries of individual churches, or silently within the larger ministerial-led state conventions. Beginning in the early 1880s and into the next decade, they struck out on a new and separate course by forging their own sphere of influence at the state level.\textsuperscript{37}

Reaffirming Mason’s support of women, Elsie Mason, the founder’s widow stated that Mason “gave the women the privilege to do whatever they wanted, as long as they had scripture to back up what they wanted to do.” \textsuperscript{38}

Yet the highest office for women in the COGIC church was that of international, state, or local “church mother/supervisor.” She was to function as would a supportive “wife” in the domestic sphere. The church mother “is to the pastor in the local church what a wife is to her husband in the home.”\textsuperscript{39} The term “mother” was particularly useful because it fused secular and the spiritual domains in a manner that valued an African concept of motherhood. The mother—supreme matriarch—invoked the power to lead, organize, produce, and nurture. The pastor (son) was certainly expected to lead the church, yet he held deep respect for his “mother (wife), knowing that he could not accomplish much without her.

The second highest position listed under the category of “women’s work” was that of the evangelist missionary, who “is expected to help build the work on all levels.” Hardly a free agent, she operates with the endorsement of her pastor and juridisdictional supervisor. In addition, she “must be available to travel and conduct revivals whenever and wherever called upon.”\textsuperscript{40}


\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 19.
While thousands of COGIC women filled or supported women appointed to the aforementioned positions, four women in particular helped systematize COGIC Women’s Work in the Southwest: Mothers Lizzie Robinson; Lillian Brooks Coffey; Evangelist Nancy Gamble; Mother Mattie McGlothen; and Mother Emma Frances Crouch. Energized by spiritual and secular motivations to work and move, each established noteworthy precedents for aspiring COGIC women.

**Mother Lizzie Woods Roberson:**

Mother Lizzie Woods Roberson acted as the First International Mother of the Church of God in Christ and First International Supervisor of Women from 1911 to 1945. Although she was born a slave in Phillips County, Arkansas, on April 5, 1860, her experience countered the stereotypical image of the aimless freedwoman, ill-fitted for her newfound liberty. Roberson entered the twentieth century with a clear sense of mission and purpose. Life may have forced her to do so. For by the close of the Civil War, she and her four sisters and brother were fatherless. Yet Roberson’s mother ensured that her children be educated. Not long after Lizzie had learned to read, at age eight she began to study the Bible. She needed the strength drawn from her readings, for by age fifteen she was motherless. In “Mother to the Motherless, Father to the Fatherless,” Cheryl Townsend Gilkes argues that slaves [i]n their reading of Psalm 68 and by extension the other psalms that speak directly of the “poor,” the “fatherless,” the “widow,” “the weak.” and the “captive, ...understood that they were poor and in need of liberation.” She continues:

---

In recognizing their “fatherlessness” black people grappled with the “natal alienation” or social death.” (Patterson). Their humanity was legally stripped from them and their only realistic challenge was moral and religious in a society where ideologies of freedom and citizenship abounded. Psalm 68 as part of their Afrocentric reading became a promise of ultimate empowerment. As biblical rights and privileges. Their emphasis on “Jubilee” as an aspect of liberation and freedom perceived that even in biblical slavery, a challenge existed to the injustice they experienced. The Bible offered a vision of economic equity and citizenship. Redemption or salvation incorporated economic and political empowerment and a restoration to civil status.\(^{42}\)

Despite the absence of both her mother and father, Roberson survived the complex relationship between gender, power, and community that complicated the religio-cultural experience of her recent ancestors.

Although little is known of Roberson’s life from age fifteen to thirty-two, it is certain that within that span of time she gave birth to a daughter and was twice married and widowed, and perhaps even more devoted to her biblical worldview. In 1892 she moved from Helena to Pine Bluff. In 1901, nine years later, she met Miss Joanna P. Moore, publisher of the Bible lessons publication titled \textit{Hope}. The messages contained in the \textit{Hope} Bible lessons sent Roberson on a quest for deeper spirituality.

Baptist by birth, Roberson (then Mrs Lizzie Woods) attended the Baptist Academy in Dermott, Arkansas. While there, Elder D. W. Welk introduced her to Bishop Mason and Elder J. H. Boone who were attending convocation services in Pine Bluff. Bishop Mason discussed the Scripture with her and testified of receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1907 during the Azusa Street Revival. Moved by his testimony, Mother Roberson responded immediately, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Upon her confession, Roberson received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.\(^{43}\)

As were most early twentieth-century Pentecostals, Roberson was expelled from the Baptist academy because of her beliefs and forced to find work elsewhere. Thereafter


\(^{43}\) \textit{The Memphis Corporate Salute}, 1996. 21.
she was employed by a physician in Trenton and Jackson, Tennessee. Determined to solidify her experience, Roberson attended convocation services in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where she met the “Singing Evangelist,” Lillian Brooks (Coffey). Coffey extended to Roberson the right hand of fellowship as she united with the COGIC and encouraged her to attend the national convocation in Memphis, Tennessee, that fall.\textsuperscript{44}

Not long after her arrival, Bishop Mason recognized not only Roberson’s potential as an organizer and leader, but also her gift as a teacher of the Word. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes argues that Mason may have been inspired to recruit Roberson given the exciting precedent established by Roberson’s contemporary “heroines in racial uplift and black education,”\textsuperscript{45} including Mary McLeod Bethune; Nannie Helen Burroughs; Ida B. Wells (Mason’s “neighbor”);\textsuperscript{46} and Mary Church Terrell. Although the work of the Women’s Department had already begun, the entity lacked organization. Realizing that Roberson turned out to be a godsend, Coffey urged Bishop Mason to invite Roberson to help organize the Women’s Department in 1911. Roberson accepted the offer. Consequently, Mason named her First General Supervisor for the Department of Women in 1912, a position she would hold for thirty-four years.

Reflecting the influence of the Baptist academy, Roberson established the first Prayer and Bible Band for the COGIC. A few years later, she introduced the Sewing Circle. And in 1926, after a meeting with Elder Searcy, the first Secretary Treasurer of the Home and Foreign Missions Department, Roberson organized the Home and Foreign Missions Board. Securing a charter and the records of Elder Searcy who chose to continue missions work in South Africa, Mother Roberson appointed Elder C.G. Brown as Searcy’s replacement. Roberson’s organizational skills proved fruitful in that the Bible Band, Sewing Circle, and Home and Foreign Missions constituted effective avenues for successful evangelical campaigns in rural areas throughout the country.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, ““Together and in Harness,”” 688.
Roberson also established and communicated the strict code of behavior and uniformity of dress that eventually became the hallmarks of early black "Sanctified" women and men. According to her dress code, women were to wear black skirts and white blouses to church meetings and services. They could expose neither their toes nor knees, nor could they wear jewelry or feathers (decorously worn in that era). Hidden in the future, makeup, relaxers, and hair straighteners had not yet become issues for black women.\footnote{\textit{This information can be found in The Memphis Corporate Salute, 1996. It is also reprinted in Earline Allen, compiler, “COGIC: History at a Glance,” a course outline (Houston, Texas 1996).}} Men, on the other hand, could not wear ties.\footnote{\textit{Dupree, 231-232.}} They were to wear long sleeves and shirts buttoned to the collar. When COGIC convention time arrived, however, modesty gave way to high-but-holy-fashioned, pomp and circumstance, particularly when meetings were held in large urban areas where starched suits, fur coats, and hats were part of the cultural milieu.\footnote{\textit{See Appendix 1.}}

Further demonstrating her pervasive influence, Roberson gave Bishop Charles Mason $168.50 to start COGIC’s very first bank account. A gifted teacher of the scripture as well, Roberson also established the first COGIC church in Omaha, Nebraska.\footnote{\textit{The Story of Bishop C.H. Mason & COGIC Development (Video).}} Because of her counsel and comportment, those who knew her well continue to cherish her memory. A few of her appointees continue to function as supervisors of women today.\footnote{\textit{Ibid., 231—232.}}

Having helped established a sure foundation for the Grand Old Church, even outliving three husbands, Roberson expired in her quarters at the Dora Roberson Building in the early morning hours of December 13, 1945, during the Holy Convocation. Her daughter and only child (from her first marriage), Ida Florence Holt Baker, then became Secretary Treasurer of the Home and Foreign Missions Board.\footnote{\textit{The Memphis Corporate Salute, 1996, 21.}}
The breadth and scope of Roberson’s influence within the COGIC organization is perhaps best reflected in the lengths to which members of the organization have gone to preserve her memory. In addition to the attention given to Roberson by the COGIC press, in April 1993 the Lizzie Roberson House in Omaha was added to the National Register of Historic Places.\textsuperscript{53} Located at 2864 Corby Street, the house was chosen because Roberson had established the Church of God in Christ in Nebraska in 1916. Since that time sixteen COGIC congregations have been established in Nebraska, including thirteen in Omaha. Roberson Memorial Church, 2318 N. 26th Street, also commemorates Roberson and her husband’s efforts. Indicating the breadth and scope of her regional influence, in the year 1996-97, Nebraska counted at least twenty-one COGIC pastors; thirty-three elders; six ministers; eighty-three evangelist missionaries.\textsuperscript{54} In honor of her contributions, three-block stretch of Erskine Street in Omaha (24th to 27th) has been renamed “Lizzie Roberson Avenue,” a change unanimously supported by the Omaha City Council. City Planning Director Gary Prior stated that “Lizzie Robinson [sic] is significant historically for her role as organizer of the women’s ministry for the church.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Lillian Brooks Coffey:}

“We make no excuse for the things which we have here, for that which we have the Lord has provided, and we are thankful.” \textsuperscript{56}

Lillian Brooks Coffey

Mother Lillian Brook Coffey (Little Lillian) succeeded Roberson as the Second General Supervisor for the Department of Women. In 1945, Mason chose Coffey not


\textsuperscript{56} DJPree, \textit{Biographical Dictionary}, 56. This statement was the motto for the Lillian Brooks Coffey Rest Home.
simply because she was saved under his ministry or raised as his daughter in the absence of Coffey’s deceased parents, but because she had trained under Roberson’s leadership, worked as her secretary, and finally as Assistant National Supervisor. Having traveled extensively with both Roberson and Mason, and well in tune with the workings of the COGIC, Coffey was more than prepared to assumed Roberson’s responsibilities. Coffey not only supported Mason, but also continued to train COGIC women, keeping them richly involved in the organization.

Having begun to demonstrate her leadership potential before her appointment as Second General Supervisor, in 1944 Coffey perceived the need for a home for elderly COGIC church mothers, missionaries, and workers, “worn-out” from their demanding lives of service to the church. Coffey’s dream was realized at 154 Arden Park, Detroit, Michigan, where she founded the Millionaires Mansion, believed to be the finest of its kind. Coffey also operated a three-section national office at the Memphis Temple Headquarters and a full-time office in Chicago where she resided.

Continuing her efforts, in 1950 Coffey dreamed of organizing an annual Women’s International Convention. She shared her plans with Senior Bishop Mason, who extended enthusiastic approval for the project. Coffey’s vision proved to have been timely, for it experienced phenomenal reception and growth throughout the COGIC polity. Bishop S. M. Crouch, of California, offered to host the first gathering in 1951. In honor of Crouch’s magnanimity, the Women’s Convention is held in California every sixth year. Since that time, the convention has been held in every major U.S. city and is generally followed by post-Convention trips abroad. Further using her influence in a constructive manner, in 1953, Coffey and the Department of Women constructed for Charles and Elsie Mason a charming ranch home in Memphis, Tennessee, on Mason Street, which Memphis city officials named in the bishop’s honor.

57 Ibid. The fact that Coffey decided not to remarry because Bishop Mason “forbade” her doing so suggests the scope of the bishop’s influence.
Given the gradual modernization of COGIC and the extensive work that COGIC women were accomplishing, Coffey also foresaw the need to substitute the early COGIC appellation “State Mother” with the more modern term “State Supervisor.” And she established other entities to organize and define the many roles that women played in the COGIC polity. Following the convention in Albany, New York, and the post trip to New York World’s Fair, Coffey relinquished her position to Dr. Anne L. Bailey of Detroit, just two years after the passing of Senior Bishop C.H. Mason.\footnote{Memphis Corporate Salute, 1996, 21.}

**District Missionary Nancy Gamble:**

While Mothers Lizzie Roberson and Lillian Brooks Coffey distinguished themselves at the national level, District Missionary and pioneer Nancy Gamble (1873-ca. 1950), born in Thorton (Calhoun County), Arkansas, set a precedent of dedication for mothers serving at the state level. “Distinctive in her appearance,” wearing a “black bonnet trimmed in white ...[and] tied” snug “under [her] chin,” Mother Gamble sang and played the guitar as she “work[ed] out” (established) Church of God in Christ (COGIC) churches in Texas.\footnote{DuPree, Biographical Dictionary, 99.} Born eight years after the Emancipation, Gamble seems to have been determined to help neighboring Texans redeem the time “accidentally” lost in bondage. Black slaves in Texas, namely those residing in rural areas,\footnote{M. Louise Passey, “Freedmantom: The Evolution of A Black Neighborhood in Houston, 1865-1880.” (Master’s of Arts Thesis, Rice University, April 1993). 32.} unknowingly forfeited two years of freedom because news of the Emancipation did not reach many of them until June 19, 1867. Accordingly, Gamble, who was “sanctified” in Tyler, Texas, under pastor James T. Blakely, joined forces with several spirited COGIC church mothers, equally as determined as she to the COGIC mission: Mother Annie Lee Pennington (Bailey), Mother Hattie Fray, and Mother Haynes. After completing her job in Texas, Gamble extended her efforts to include New Brunswick, New Jersey, where her brother and sister-in-law, Elder and Sister Hall, resided. Her “traveling shoes” still...
unworn, in 1925 Gamble founded the Faith Temple in East Chicago, Indiana, and thereafter proceeded with evangelistic work Marion and Kokomo, Indiana. While some might been preparing to retire at age 59, Gamble was not. In 1942 in Kokomo, she founded an enduring mission at 1001 N. Kennedy (now Atterson Way) in an edifice that had once been used as a fish market; the Christian symbolism evoked was certain to have been useful. As a result of Gamble’s involvement in the COGIC church, Mother Lizzie Roberson appointed her the first state supervisor of Illinois.

**Other Pioneering Women in Texas:**

Mother Hannah Chandler, who provided a distinguished career of service for the COGIC organization in Texas, was not alone in her Southwestern achievements. In later years, native Texan Mother Mattie McGlothen made extensive contributions to the COGIC. McGlothen’s story highlights the historic Texas/California migratory trek that informed the lived experiences of many black Texans.

The eleventh of fifteen children, McGlothen was born to Mr. and Mrs. Evans T. Carter in Tehuacana, Texas, a small town near Dallas, but she was raised in communities in the vicinity of Tehuacana and Mexia. At age six, she moved to Sapulpa, Oklahoma, and “thought she must be in Heaven, for it was the first time she had ever been to town or seen the bright ‘city lights.’”

McGlothen attended public school in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, from age six and a half to age fifteen. A bout with tuberculosis kept her out of school for a eighteen months. In order to catch up with her studies, she was sent to Kansas City, Kansas, where she attended Quindaro College. In 1921 she graduated valedictorian of her class. Among her roommates were Mother L. O. Hale. Also in McGlothen’s company was the legendary Lena Horne. Sharing the same balcony, the two the sang together in the college choir.

---

throughout their tenure at Quindaro. As Horne traveled throughout the country, she kept in contact with McGlothen who taught grades one through nine in Depew, Oklahoma, for four years.

When Mattie returned home in May 1921, she learned that her mother was “saved.” In July of the same year, while returning home from the “picture show” with a young woman Emma Washington, the two chatted about a revival conducted by a Pentecostal evangelist, Missionary Lula Powell. Both had heard that attendants were “being healed.” Inquisitive by nature, Mattie decided to verify the claims. Taking note of Mattie, Powell persuaded her to enter the small church. Without planning to, McGlothen “received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and was healed that very night.”62 According to Clark, McGlothen’s biographer, McGlothen affirmed, “I could hear Mother Powell say, ‘Come on God, come on God, do your work, do your work.’ and the Holy Ghost came in.”63

After Mattie’s conversion and baptism, she join Elder Griffin’s church, the host congregation for Powell’s revival. Thereafter, she aspired to be a missionary. The following year, Mattie (Carter) began to “court” George McGlothen. According to Clark, courting was different then. “The young folk would meet at church, walk to the top of the hill and turn around and come back.”64 Despite their walks strolls up the hill, Mattie McGlothen was not quite sure she wanted to wed George. She remembered:

In September of 1922, I met George McGlothen. He had come to church. He was the biggest gambler in Oklahoma. I hated him and he hated me. He didn’t speak to me and I didn’t speak to him. George had just gotten out of jail and came straight to the church. When he saw my sister he said, “Miss Cox, Miss Cox, I’m converted, I’m converted. She thought he was drunk. In a day or two he began to talk to me. This went on for about two months until he got serious.65

---

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 5.
65 Ibid., 29.
Perhaps knowing the political power of the preacher in those days, George informed Elder C. Range of his feelings toward McGlothlen, confiding to Range that he wanted to marry “that girl.” Believing that George’s salvation alone made him a worthy candidate for marriage, Range said to young Mattie, “This boy is saved—all his sins are behind him. You marry this boy.” The case was settled, for as Clark said, “during those days you obeyed the preacher.” Range then took the two to Joplin, Missouri, where Mattie married her ex-gambler in 1923.

Times were hard for the young couple initially, as they generally were for young Pentecostal couples starting out in full-time ministry. McGlothlen remembered:

Our first mission journey was to Hugo, Oklahoma; however, the mission in Idabelle took all the money we had. I had two dresses to my name; one was a black pinned-stripe, the other a red pinned stripe. I wore those big old black ribbed stockings and when they wore out, I wore Dad’s socks because my dresses were down to my ankles.66

Recalling even more difficult financial struggles, McGlothlen recalled:

One time, we didn’t have anything to eat. I went to the Church and just shouted and never told my people what was happening. Somehow or nother while rambling around, I found a sweet potato. I said, “Come on Dad, I’ve got dinner fixed.” I said, “Sit down, that’s all we’ve got.” I didn’t let him pray and I didn’t pray either. I remember starting off crying. I pushed that sweet potato to him—he pushed it back to me and we pushed it back and forth to one another.67

Distraught by their lack, George, “got up from the table and went into the bedroom. A few minutes later, [Mattie] went in there. He was down on his knees crying. [Mattie] got on [her] knees beside him and said, “Don’t cry, Dad, the Lord is going to make a way.” As McGlothlen recalled, “[her] pastor’s wife said the Lord touched her. As we went out the door to go home, Sister Griffin said, ‘Brother George, the Lord told me to give you this.’ She gave [them] a $5.00 bill.” As deeply trying experiences often

66 Ibid., 30.
67 Ibid., 31.
lodge themselves in the recesses of the mind, McGlothen affirmed: "I can’t forget that one sweet potato. I’ll go to Heaven with that sweet potato image. One sweet potato was all we had, and no butter to go with it."68

Given Mattie’s and George’s dedication to each other and to the ministry, matters certainly changed over time. She and her husband gradually moved up the COGIC ranks. Bishop Crouch welcomed the two to pastor Fresno Temple in Fresno, California. Crouch sent them to survey the church and tell him their decision, agreeing to help them relocated to California if they opted to accept his offer. Both “fell in love with the church and moved.”69 While in route to Fresno, the McGlothen’s also pastored in Los Angeles, California for a short while. Not long after their Fresno experience, Crouch offered them a church that needed a pastor in Richmond, California.

The McGlothens never forgot the day of their arrival in Richmond. It was “pouring down rain,” perhaps as a harbinger of what became “a long and fruitful ministry.”70 During World War II, the congregation soon outgrew the small edifice and constructed “McGlothen Temple Church of God in Christ.” Continuing to work out churches, in 1945 now Bishop George W. and Mother Mattie McGlothen organized a church in Pittsburg, California, also named in their honor. The church was the first structure to be located at 4th and Montezuma Streets.

Owing to her and her husband’s pioneering work, in 1933 Mattie McGlothen was appointed State Supervisor of California, and installed in April 1934. She was assigned to the northern area while Mother L. O. Hale supervised the southern region, a part of Bishop S. Crouch’s jurisdiction. On December 13, 1939, Mother Lizzie Roberson re-appointed McGlothen State Supervisor of all of Northern California, presided over by Bishop E. B. Stewart. Meanwhile, in November 1957 Bishop E. E. Hamilton started

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 9.
70 Ibid.
presiding over twenty-two churches, eventually managing sixty-three. In January of 1958, a jurisdiction was officially organized to ensure the smooth governance of affiliate churches. Dr. Mattie McGlothen was appointed Supervisor of California Northwest and distinguished herself by serving five jurisdictional prelates for a total of thirty-six years: Bishops E. E. Hamilton, S. R. Martin, Milton Mathis, Clarence Davis, and W.W. Hamilton. Having become an astute organizer and leader, Mother McGlothen supervised the women of 136 churches and missions in the California Northwest Jurisdiction.\footnote{Ibid., 11.}

Because of her ability and proven loyalty to the COGIC organization, McGlothen was eventually promoted to International Mother of the Church of God in Christ in 1976.\footnote{Ibid., 13.} In May 1976 Bishop J. O. Patterson confirmed he appointment with the following letter:

The year of 1975 brought to us a great loss in the demise of our admirable Mother Anne L. Bailey, the adorable leader of the Women’s Department. Needless to say, she left her footprints on the sands of time and made an immortal contribution to the Women’s Department of the General Church through many years of dedicated service. Through wisdom and providence of God, the mantle of leadership has fallen upon Mother Mattie McGlothen, the illustrious personality who followed close by and served as an able assistant to Mother Bailey. It would not only be Godly but just nice for all of our lovely ladies to fall right in line and work wholeheartedly with your duly appointed leader. Her many years of experience in the Church, her loyalty and devotion, her wisdom and respect for leadership have adequately qualified her to assume the challenging responsibility to ably lead the Women’s Department during these changing times.\footnote{Cited in Clark, 13.}

With the Bishop Patterson’s approval, McGlothen proceeded with the same verve that had become her trademark. It was under her leadership that the International Women’s department constructed a home for missionaries in the Bahama Islands in 1983 and a pavilion in Port-au-Prince Haiti for senior citizens and unwed mothers.\footnote{Fourth General Mother,"The Memphis Corporate Salute, 1996, 26.}
Mother Emma Frances Crouch:

While Dr. Mattie McGlothen planted most of her COGiC efforts in California, Mother Emma Frances Crouch, a relative of the aforementioned Bishop S. Crouch, served extensively in her native Texas. Crouch was born February 19, 1911, in Morris County, Texas, on the homestead of Mr. Irving Byrd, to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Searcy. After hearing of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, she was sanctified and filled in 1930. In 1938, she married Elder B. J. Crouch (later Bishop) and lived with him until his death in 1960. Crouch is the aunt of Sandra and Andrae Crouch, and the great aunt of Dr. Robert Mitchell.  

Mother Crouch’s resume resembles that of the many Pentecostal women who dedicated their lives to church work. She served as, First Chairlady of the YPWW in Texas, 1956; as District Missionary for twelve years; Chairperson of the District Missionary Board and Second State President of the Sunshine Band. Crouch also acted as an aide and traveling companion to the Second State Supervisor Bertha Polk, who proceeded Hannah Chandler. She also served as president of the National Usher’s Board, 1960. And she served on the Board of Directors for Saints Center. She then acted as First Assistant General Supervisor 1976-1994 to Mother Mattie McGlothen. Her highest ranking position was that of Fifth General Supervisor of COGiC, 1994-1997.

Crouch made contributions to the COGiC in a number of other areas as well. She reorganized the Board of Supervisors, dividing the faction into Circles “One” and “Two”. Crouch appointed area supervisors to serve as National Supervisors Representatives and re-established the National Pastor’s Aide. In addition, Crouch created the General Board of Bishops’ Wives Circle; created The National Deaconess Circle; appointed an historian for the Department of Women; re-established the office of Executive Secretary for the Department; served as the Fourth President of the Women’s International Convention;

75 Whole Truth Magazine (February-March 1997, 10-11.)
and organized the Historical Book Committee to chronicle the history of the Women’s International Convention.\textsuperscript{76}

Like many COGIC women before her, Crouch dedicated her entire life to church work. The legacies that she and her predecessors and contemporaries left suggest that COGIC women were not only content to be COGIC, but found church work to be fulfilling and self-affirming. The examples that they and their leaders provided served as models for black Pentecostal men and women throughout the country and century. Even while others may have criticized COGIC praise (too emotional for some) or COGIC politics (too sensitive to bloodline and heritage for others), none could conceivably deny these sons and daughters of slaves had managed to establish a truly “Grand Old Church.”

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
Chapter 4: “Behold, I Do a New Thing”: The Emergence of African American Independent Pentecostals (AAIPs)

Already spiritually empowered by the COGIC example and those of other black Pentecostal groups, a growing number of African American Pentecostals of the Southwest sought to establish independent churches relieved of the burden of hierarchy. Many left the COGIC polity and others to participate in the Latter Rain movement of the late 1940s and 1950s, nearly fifty years after the birth of Pentecostalism in 1906. In leaving the COGIC system, they essentially parted with an African-oriented religious system (a “holy” nation within a nation) based on the idea of perpetual and unquestioned authority\(^1\) to an American system based on the free will of the people. This shift in the locus of power eventually meant that pastors had to grapple with a fundamental by-product of democracy, i.e., the nature of the free market and the spirit of competition.

Yet the transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic one did not happen instantaneously. For the people who joined the independent movement were still products of their environment. Thus loyalty and respect for spiritual elders continued for the next generation despite emigrants having chosen a new framework for governance. The deference to authority that they were conditioned to display was reflected in the way they described their relationship to their leaders. The older the saint, the more likely (s)he is to express that (s)he was “saved under” (converted) or that (s)he “served under” (assisted) a particular minister or bishop. The philosophical shift from the African to American also meant that blacks independent ministers began to find mentors from without the black community. The full effect of this cultural/political shift would not be felt in black Pentecostal-Charismatic circles until the 1980s when church becomes “big business” and the “old-time way” and its “old-timers” are increasingly challenged.

\(^1\)Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 96. Paris posits the following: “Analogous to the patriarch in the traditional African family, the pastor has always been the regal head of the African American community in much the same way as traditional African kings exercised primary authority in the tribal community.”
During the advent of the Latter Rain movement, freedom and democracy were most vividly expressed in the exodus from the powerful COGIC polity. Parting with tradition was a radical idea, particularly in an era when loyalty, trustworthiness, and respect for leadership were highly prized concepts. Among those entering the Latter Rain movement in Houston were Arthur Bonds, H.W. Falls, J.L. Parker, and Leola Crawford. An examination of their lives suggests that while ethnocentrism, classism, condescension, and/or regionalism often inhibited their historical valuation, their quest for freedom, individuality, and “the more of God,” i.e., deeper spirituality, placed them securely within the American ideological mainstream.

Thanks to the undaunted efforts of their spiritual foremothers and fathers, Bonds, Falls, Parker and Crawford had already accepted at least two important Pentecostal beliefs: that men could be filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues; and that the healing power of God was available to all who believed. This meant that the pioneers of independent Pentecostalism were free to concentrate on honing other spiritual gifts believed to accompany the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—spiritual territory that a now conservative COGIC church was cautious to explore. Having already embraced the call for a spiritual separation from the world, they initiated a deliberate second phase of their presumed Abrahamic exodus; they aimed to literally possess more of the land by establishing churches where the spirit could move freely and without interruption. Looking for relief from a harsh social environment, they longed for a spiritual awakening—the fall of the Latter Rain.

The Latter Rain Movement originated at Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada. The president of Sharon’s “Global Missions” was George Hawtin, who had been a pastor of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) and had founded Bethel Bible Institute in Star City, Saskatchewan, in 1935. The Latter
Rain Movement, thus, constituted the second major twentieth-century revival; the Pentecostal movement that William Seymour initiated at Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906, was the first. Throughout the nation and in Houston the movement was characterized by reports of healings and other miraculous phenomena, in contrast to the preceding decade, which was described by Pentecostals as a time of spiritual dryness and lack of God’s presence. The Latter Rain Movement stressed the imminence of the premillennial return of Jesus Christ, preceded by an outpouring of God’s Spirit, which was expected in accordance with the symbolic “former rain” and the “latter rain” of Joel 2:28-29 (KJV):

(28) And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall see visions: (29) And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

The passages were interpreted as a dual prophecy of the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was to immediately precede the coming of the Lord. There was an emphasis on spiritual gifts, which were to be received by the laying on of hands, in contrast to the old Pentecostal practice of “tarrying” for the Holy Spirit that had become widespread during the years prior to the revival.²

Of national evangelists preaching the message of the Latter Rain in the Southwest, Evangelist A.A. Allen, a white man, made perhaps the greatest impact among black Texans. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, Allen stressed that the Latter Rain Movement was for people of all races and of all faiths. Having grown up in poverty with an alcoholic father and an unfaithful mother in Sulphur Rock, Arkansas, Allen welcomed the poor without condescension and remained one of the few white evangelists who spoke out against the segregationist codes of the Jim Crow South; his gatherings were integrated from the pulpit to the pew. Moreover, he appointed Gene Martin, a young black

²Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements. 532–534.
songster, to lead the crowds in praise. For those two reasons, African American Pentecostals of the Southwest loved Allen. Any white man who dared to respect African Americans in a region that legislated their collective disfranchisement was immediately transformed into an icon of justice within African American Pentecostal communities, especially given that most southern white Christians quickly ignored the interracial foundations of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement.

Allen’s efforts were complemented by other small-scale, but influential evangelists who preached the Latter Rain message of inclusion and fairness. White evangelist J.D. Grace of Dallas, Texas, fell into this category. Grace’s challenge to experience the freedom of the spiritual expression welcomed by the Latter Rain Movement did not fall on deaf ears among African American Pentecostals in Houston, a growing number of whom were eager to by-pass the exigencies of COGIC politics. Now independent Pentecostals as opposed to COGIC adherents, AAIP pastors continued to stress sanctification preached in the COGIC church, but they add to a multifaceted call for even more spontaneous worship, freedom of the spirit, and a fluid exercising of all nine spiritual gifts: tongues, prophecy, interpretation, healing, discernment of spirits, faith, wisdom, miracles, and knowledge. Unlike in the COGIC, AAIP women could pursue careers as pastors, although this does not mean that their pastoral efforts remain unchallenged.

Enticing black pastors away from the Grand Old Church (COGIC) was not an easy task. For not only did members take pride in the COGIC’s African American roots but also in its growing respect throughout the Christian world. In 1945, for example,

---

3 Allen’s tent meetings fostered networking opportunities for black independent pastors among many of whom ties remained for years to come. Following conversion, for example, Roy Lee Kossie met Bishop J. L. Parker of the Bible Way Church of Holiness in Trinity Gardens for the first time. Thereafter, he joined Parker’s ministry and quickly moved up the spiritual ranks; he became a deacon within two years of his joining. Similarly, Johnnie Mae Driver, wife of Pastor C.C. Driver, affirms that she and her husband decided to fellowship with Roy Lee Kossie after meeting him at one of Allen’s revivals.
Bishop Mason dedicated the Mason Temple at Memphis, Tennessee, built for less than $400,000 during World War II. The auditorium became the largest convention hall owned by any African American religious group in America. By 1950 COGIC had established hundreds of churches throughout the United States and also in the Caribbean Islands. Yet ministers like Falls, who became the first COGIC pastor in the Houston area to embrace the Latter Rain Movement, felt that many guardians of the COGIC order had averted the founder’s spiritual mission. Despite the size and prestige of COGIC, interest among many black ministers in the Latter Rain Movement prevailed; its emphasis on spiritual egalitarianism, freedom, and on the gifts of the spirit proved to be hard to resist.

As in other parts of the country, the Latter Rain Movement of the late 1940s and 1950s in Houston was paralleled by the Healing Movement. Riding on the tidal wave of popularity created by national faith-healer/evangelists including Oral Roberts and William Branham, both white, Reverend Arthur Bonds, a black minister of COGIC background, began his crusade to heal the sick in Houston’s Fifth Ward. Coming to Houston via Georgia, Florida, and San Antonio, when Bonds arrived he found ample opportunities to exercise his gift; African Americans, bound by the limitations of Jim Crow despite having served in two world wars, were among the first awaiting solace. Moreover, black Houstonians faced an acute housing shortage and high unemployment despite the city’s apparent prosperity. Yet they were not alone in their suffering, for these were times of great mourning and tension. Notwithstanding Houston’s sudden increase in population to 625,000 inhabitants due to annexation, families continued to bury loved ones lost in the ravages of the war. Even though Israel’s reunification in 1948 merited celebration among members of the Judeo-Christian community, the Bayou City’s Jewish community continued to lament the extermination of six million kinsmen in German concentration

---


5 *Houston Informer*, September 24, 1949, 1.
camps. Meanwhile the entire nation prepared to defend democracy and capitalism against
the threat of communism as it spread throughout Red China and Russia.

When Bonds arrived in Fifth Ward, the district bore the bittersweet characteristics
of a segregated community. Lyons Avenue, caroused day and night by black Houstonians
and adventure-seeking whites, was lined with wood-framed and red brick four-walled
structures. Two such buildings housed the famous Black Cat and Brisco's night clubs.
Little did some of the clubs' highrollers know that they would eventually be enticed to
join Bonds' "holy-rollers" in outdoor meetings only a few blocks down the road. On the
west end of Lyons, Clay and Clay Funeral Home buried the deceased while Louis White
and Burt's grocery stores fed the living. The Lyons and Deluxe theaters, constructed for
black audiences, provided young couples opportunities to swoon under the magnetism of
Clark Gable or to cheer for Buck James in "shoot'em ups." While Ethel Waters secured
an indelible place in the hearts of Americans through rich vocal performances in Cabin in
the Sky, Bonds created his own heavenly drama a few miles down the dusty avenue.
Besides, admission was free.

Upon Bonds's arrival in 1949, black and white Pentecostals had already begun to
make inroads into Houston's African American religious community. White Evangelist
Raymond T. Richey, founder of Evangelistic Temple in 1933 and of the Richey
Evangelistic Association, had already established a mega-ministry. Sending letters and
postcards to his partners, i.e., financial supporters, to keep them informed, Richey
conducted revivals through the country in his red, white, and blue tent. In largely
separate camps, numerous black COGIC pastors served the African American
Pentecostal community as well.\footnote{Until the advent of the Latter Rain Movement of the 1940s and 1950s, most African American Pentecostals in Houston worshipped in one of seventeen Churches of God in Christ. Other might have placed their memberships at one of the nineteen Pentecostal Churches or of nine Churches of God dispersed through the city. Yet Bonds found pastors of some of the more established denominations--especially C.O.G.I.C. ones--on the verge of a spiritual revolution. Black members of the "Grand Ole Church" were about to embrace the controversial Latter Rain Movement. Bishop H.W. Falls, a native of McNare, Louisiana, pastor and founder of Zion Temple in the Fourth Ward since 1933, became the first C.O.G.I.C. male African American minister in Houston to enter the Latter Rain Movement. He cited a lack of}
Fervently praying for signs and wonders, Bonds and faith healers similar to him welcomed the challenges at the heart of distressed communities like the one Fifth Ward was becoming. While he preached to Chicago via radio, this thin mahogany man of regal demeanor graced Houstonians with his constant presence and drew crowds of thousands to open air meetings at Clinton Park. Perhaps suspicious of newcomers or rivals, pastors of established black Baptist, Pentecostal, and Methodist churches cautioned against what they deemed to be emotionalism laced with “hoodoo.” Yet attendants reported deliverance from broken limbs, hearts, and spirits, from troubled minds and relationships. Perhaps the city’s indigenous clergy need not have feared, for although some people who experienced conversion became members of Bonds’s God’s Holy Tabernacle, most joined other churches throughout the city. For example, Mother Mamie Woods, who testified to having “accepted the Lord” in one of Elder Bonds’s meetings, remained a member of the Latter Day Revival Center from 1953 until her death, April 6, 1995. While Mother Woods figured among those who went on to serve in other churches, Bishop H.M. Bolden and Pastor Dorothy Summersville represented those who eventually became pastors themselves. Yet the experiences of Woods, Bolden, and Summersville only hint at the unwritten magnitude of Reverend Bonds’s ministry.

spirituality as a principle reason for his parting. Fall’s “son in the gospel,” J.L. Parker of present-day Bible Way Holiness church, poised himself to respond to a calling to harvest souls in Trinity Gardens in northeast Houston under the banner of the Latter Rain Movement.

7 T.C. Carothers, “The Life of Elder Bonds in Houston” (date, nature, and place of publication unknown)
8 Karen Kossie, Recollections of Mother Mamie Wood’s Personal Testimony, 1989.
10 Saved in 1949 at age 13 and graduating in 1955 from Phyllis Wheatley High School, the young Henry Melvin Bolden, a native Houstonian, began his ministry in 1958 when only twenty-two years old. Although he worked as a grocery stocker, Bolden found service in the church a much more enriching experience. His 37-year-old Rock of Salvation Holiness Church (popularly referred to as “The Rock”) testifies to the profundity of his conversion experience. Bolden’s further establishment of some ten or more additional churches demonstrates the depth of his dedication. As recently as November 1995, Bolden evidenced his loyalty and appreciation to his spiritual father, Arthur Bonds, by placing a paid commemorative in the church souvenir booklet containing 70 entries submitted on behalf of the belated reverend and faith healer.

Similar to Bolden, Pastor Dorothy Berry Summersville of Miracle Deliverance Center True Holiness Church, a native of Alexandra, Louisiana, was also converted under Elder Bonds’s ministry. Delivered from the juke joints of Fifth Ward, from the low-down-dirty-blues of Gate Mouth Brown and Lightening Hopkins, Pastor Summersville recalls having spent “many a night walking up and down Lyons Avenue,” and being so inebriated that the sidewalks and curbs of the “Bloody Fifth” easily
Thousands of others met the “small, meek, humble man” who, in the words of one disciple, “came preaching the word of God, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, making the deaf and dumb speak and hear, and the lame walk.” While Bonds’s place of origin remained a mystery then, Houstonians could not deny his presence. According to T.C. Carothers, Bonds’s “appearance was announced, quick, sudden but positive.” More impressively, “he came not to Houston’s finest Negro churches, but appeared in the slums, where dice crimes of all kinds were committed.” Due to the size of his gatherings, Bonds arrested the attention of the Houston Informer, the Post, and Chronicle. The Informer covered Bonds’s affairs quite consistently for approximately five months. On May 14, 1949, Bonds was given front-page coverage because a young woman was healed at the “Holy Grounds”:

Mrs. Ester Lee Word, 1408 Leeland, age 21 who has been cripple and on crutches reportedly for three years, testified that she went to Elder Bonds Wednesday, and now I am walking around without my crutches...I have great faith in Elder Bonds and what he and God have done for me.

The reporter recording the story “attested to the fact that Ward was walking without a crutch.” More healings followed Ward’s experience. Rows of shiny black ambulances loaded with sick people lined up daily at the “Holy Grounds” where Bonds held his meetings. A reporter recorded in wonderment that “the crowd never ends until late in the night when they begin to thin out. But at the break of sunrise, they begin to gather,
coming by bus, car, any means. Many ambulances are now in service that had been taken from use in order to meet the demand for service.”

As early as May 21, 1949, however, only one month after Bonds’s first appearance in the Informer, the healer fell from grace as skepticism mounted. The Informer’s lengthy headlines resounded: “HEALER WANT $ A HEAD FOR PATIENTS, DRIVERS SAY; TEST CASE MAY PUT ELDER BONDS ON THE SPOT.” Of course, Bonds denied the allegations, informing the black press that the ambulance drivers themselves were to blame for the charges.

A week later Reverend Bonds’s name wreaked havoc at nearby Phyllis Wheatley High School. Several hundred Wheatley students allegedly “fled the school in terror,” fearing the school’s apocalyptic destruction. According to rumor, Bonds was to “blow up the edifice at 12 a.m. because of the institution’s ‘sinful ways” School principal Dr. John Codwell contacted Bonds to learn that “such predictions had not been made by him at any time or any place and he certainly would not do anything that would harm the school or the school children.” The raucous noise that frightened students turned out to be “a giant fire cracker that had been apparently set off by some mischievous boy.”

Roy Kossie, a student in attendance during the pre-Armageddon blast, confirmed that most who claimed to be afraid had simply taken advantage of the confusion to visit the nearby Lyons theater. A sophomore at the time, he laughed that he too figured among the adventuresome.

---

14 Ibid.
16 Ibid., May 28, 1949.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Despite the frolic, the student body was hardly without academic accomplishment. For on June 21, 1949, the “Gee Whiz” Kids of Wheatley High School became the first all-black team to compete in and win the Houston Post’s-KPRC’s “Quizdown” competition. Only one year later its victory-hungry Wildcat football team would clinch the City Championship before an ecstatic crowd of 22,000. (Dr. Howard Jones, Red Diary: A Chronological History of Black Americans in Houston and Some Neighboring Harris County Communities—122 Years Later, first edition, Nortex Press, 1991.)
Bonds appeared again in the *Informer* due to an alleged “money mix-up”\(^{20}\) and later for rumors of an affair with one of his “handmaids,” i.e., one of his office assistants. Angered by the *Informer*’s story, Bonds purportedly “gave” the newspaper “three days to ‘make a correction’” in its report.\(^{21}\) Despite the mushrooming scandal, Bonds extended his activities beyond the spiritual to encourage civil obedience and harmony. On August 13, 1949, he joined the Texas Negro Peace Officers Association and was given a diamond-studded badge to commemorate his office. The following Monday, Bonds and other officers traveled in grand style to Port Arthur, Texas, to participate in the association’s annual convocation. Policemen from the sheriff’s department along with inductees made their journey in a motorcade of police and civilian cars. Detective Marshall Jenkins headed the lengthy processional, which started at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Sckwenkhart.\(^{22}\) Although the *Informer* lost interest in Bonds shortly after his spectacular arrival, he continued to pastor in the Fifth Ward until his death in 1995.

While Bonds was being lauded in a ceremony commemorating his deputation, H.W. Falls was about to become the first African American pastor in Houston to embrace the Latter Rain Movement. A man “born on wheels,”\(^{23}\) as he described himself, Falls’s initial entry into the movement mirrored his natural and spiritual journeys within the city of Houston and without. Saved in a house prayer meeting in 1925, approximately twenty years after the Los Angeles Azusa Revival, Falls later became the acting bishop of some seventy churches in Houston and in California. Falls’s move toward the Latter Rain Movement in the 1950s was shaped by a continual search for a deeper spiritual understanding and for what he called “the realness of God.” Falls’s quest for spirituality mirrored that of William Seymour whose spiritual journey was punctuated by short

---

\(^{20}\) *Houston Informer*, May 28, 1949, Vol. 55, No. 27.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., No., 36.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., August 20, 1949, Vol. 55, No. 37.
experiments with several Protestant denominations and with congregations within the same denomination.

Like many Pentecostals, Falls received his first religious training in the Baptist Church. Yet when asked what faith he embraced before Pentecostalism, Falls responded colorfully: "Been everything." He conceded, nonetheless, that he was born Baptist because his mother was Baptist. Both he and his mother belonged to Star Pilgrim Baptist Church in New Iberia, Louisiana, where Prince Albert was the pastor. Falls then moved from New Iberia to McNary, Louisiana, and joined New Bethel Baptist Church's small congregation where "seven were baptized under Reverend Daniel, a white man."²⁴ Demonstrating the fixation on (and confusion about) color characteristic of African Americans in the South, Falls quickly edited his description of Reverend Daniel to affirm: "Well, he had a little black in him, he was mulatto."²⁵

Falls's account also suggests that his quest for spirituality was inevitably shaped by a necessary search for employment; thus sacred and secular motivations for relocating reinforced each other. After working in the sawmills near his hometown, Falls moved to Oakdale, Louisiana, and began his ministry in about 1923 in a Baptist church. He married the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Williams, a minister. His first wife worked with him in ministry until she died only three years after their marriage. Falls added: "Then I became a Methodist." The catalyst for Falls's change of religion was not precipitated by his wife's death but by the intellectualism associated with Methodism:

I'm gonna be honest with you, it was intelligence...the intelligence of the Methodists that I wanted. You see, my mother and father were educated people. They would read letters and write them for whites and black in that area, but told nobody's business. They were the only people who could read and write in the New Iberia parish. [perhaps an exaggeration] So, I joined the A.M.E. Church. I was going to be a minister and would have taken four years in school. But, I didn't do it because I got sanctified.

²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Ibid.
Afterwards I married Leola Clark in Crowley, Louisiana, and moved to Houston the same day...Caught #5 [a train].

Falls added jokingly, “Ain’t gonna tell you how much money I had in my pocket.”

Falls’s hesitance to reveal his financial worth at the time coupled with his search for work suggests that he did not enter the Bayou City with many financial assets. Yet within seven years of his arrival, Falls had succeeded in establishing New Zion Temple Church of God in Christ on 1601 Ruthven and Gallette in Independent Heights (Fourth Ward). Falls proudly recounted that Zion Temple was the first brick African American Pentecostal church in the city of Houston, and the only one among blacks with a balcony.

Falls’s emphasis on the building underscores an important element in the foundational process of African American Pentecostal churches: finding and preparing a place of worship. The size and wealth of the congregation determined the degree to which fund-raising for the purpose of church beautification remained the focal point of church activity. Because pastors of the more established Baptist and Methodist denominations secured loans more easily than did their Pentecostal brothers, most Black Pentecostals were forced to hold myriad fund-raisers such as fish fries, barbecues, and musicals to support building fund efforts. A small, poor church might spend a generation attempting to refurbish an old structure and/or build a new one unless its pastor chose to concentrate on building the lives within the structure as opposed to the external edifice itself. Leola Crawford, to be discussed later, did exactly that.

In addition to furnishing a place for members to gather on Sundays, Pentecostal churches, like others, provided food and lodging for Christians attempting to establish

---

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Black Christians throughout the country have had to use creative methods to raise funds to build houses of worship. In *We’re Heaven Bound*, Gregory D. Coleman recounts an exceptional story of Bethel A.M.E. in Atlanta, Georgia, which owes its construction to a sacred drama co-authored and produced for that purpose.
themselves in the community. Falls reminisced that “[w]hen people wouldn’t have a place to stay they would call the pastor and stay in the church.” At Zion Temple, two bedrooms were at their disposal, one for overnight stay and one for stays of two weeks when needed.

While Falls and his congregation provided temporary dwelling places for newcomers, the same perception of the spiritual power that guided him to start a church led him to embrace the Latter Rain movement:

We became what they called ‘out-of-denominationalism’ into the worldwide revival service. Millions of people enjoyed freedom from denominationalism.

The “out-of-denominationalism” to which Falls referred would eventually be popularly renamed “interdenominationalism.” According to Falls, the revival that sparked the interdenominational movement in Houston began in the Heights district following the services of Reverend J.D. Grace, a white minister who held his services in a large tent. “He [Grace] prayed for the Lord to send a COGIC minister, David Anderson, an old man then, and the Lord sent me. Through a word of prophecy, the honor was bestowed upon me to lead the black folks. Since that time there’ve been millions of people filled with the Holy Ghost in Out-of-Denominationalism.” Of course, “there are different angles,” Fall’s added, “but this is my story.”

Falls’s reference to the Latter Rain Movement as out-of-denominationalism underscores the spirit of independence and democracy intrinsic in the movement. Because the Latter Rain Movement welcomed ‘all people of all faiths,’ the terms nondenominationalism and interdenominationalism were concurrently used to describe

---

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
this novel, trans-religious gathering of people.\textsuperscript{33} Beyond encouraging adherents to pursue a ‘personal relationship with God,’ participants in the Latter Rain Movement wholeheartedly welcomed not only the five-fold ministry, which includes apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11, KJV), but also the nine gifts of the spirit.\textsuperscript{34} Despite the heated controversy over the gifts of the spirit in many religious circles, Independent Pentecostals continued to exercise them as best they could.

Falls’s conviction that he had been called to Houston in response to Reverend Grace’s prophecy demonstrates the faith that Pentecostals had in God’s ability and willingness to speak to men through the Holy Spirit. Yet spontaneous communication with the Holy Spirit was clearly distinguished from sooth-saying, tarot card reading, and other forms of what are popularly called \textit{spiritualism}.\textsuperscript{35} Pentecostals considered each of the aforementioned to be counterfeits to the authentic Word of God, the source of true spirituality. Wise ministers and members, however, were trained to ‘test’ prophecies through fasting, prayer, and regular devotion. Believing that prophets’ words usually come to confirm or validate a pre-existent concern, issue, or development, believers were further instructed to “try every spirit” to ensure its Christian validity. For Pentecostals, then, a “personal relationship” with God was primordial. Believing that they were saved by grace through faith, Pentecostals further held that their faith needed to remain active via a constant pursuit of spiritual perfection and a profound desire to be instruments of God. Those who exercised the prophetic gift were important in this regard, for they helped believers to ascertain the perfect will of God for their lives.

The Reverend Grace’s having prayed for the Lord to send a COGIC minister suggests an attempt on his part to reach black Pentecostals in particular. Like H.W. Falls

\textsuperscript{33} While the number of nondenominational churches remained small in the 1940s, a 1980 \textit{Christianity Today} Gallup Poll noted that 19 percent of all adult Americans (over 29 million) consider themselves to be members of Pentecostal or charismatic churches.

\textsuperscript{34} The nine gifts of the spirit are wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, diverse kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12: 8-10).

\textsuperscript{35} See footnote number 27, page 13.
prior to the Latter Rain Movement, most African American Holiness, Sanctified, or Pentecostal believers originally attended COGIC churches. Falls’s transition from the COGIC body to interdenominationalism did not prove difficult doctrinally; members of both held the same basic beliefs. The Church of God in Christ under C.H. Mason preached that entire sanctification (subsequent to justification) would be evidenced by holiness of life and that the full blessing of Pentecost (the baptism in the Holy Spirit) would be evidenced by speaking in tongues. Observing the Lord’s Supper, baptism by immersion, and washing of the saints’ feet as ordinances, the COGIC held to strict standards of dress and personal conduct; so did saints of the Latter Rain Movement.

Not long after Bishop Falls entered the Latter Rain Movement, J.L. Parker, one of his former members and a native of Humble, Texas, replicated Fall’s example. An African American of Cherokee ancestry, “Papa,” as his members affectionately called him, was known for his strict adherence to the tenets of holiness; dress codes as well as codes of conduct, including the biblical call for fasting and prayer, were rigorously upheld at Parker’s Bible Way Church of Holiness. Those who started under Parker’s ministry honor him most for having taught them how to pray.\textsuperscript{36} Parker was equally known for his candor. An excellent storyteller, as are most preachers, he engaged his audiences with drama and humorous, sometimes caustic, anecdotes; however, to the dismay of many, he sometimes included members of his audience in the punch lines. While those who were converted and nurtured in his services loved and respected him, some grew weary of the public embarrassment to which they were randomly subjected in Parker’s presence. Despite his hard exterior during services, Parker became gentle and fatherly in more intimate settings. Those who were well acquainted with this side of “Papa” overlooked his sometimes intimidating posture. Content to shepherd the flock of believers who

\textsuperscript{36} A transcription of a prayer service attended at Parker’s church appears in the appendix.
gathered at Bible Way, Parker did not attempt to establish additional churches although he is the spiritual father of many AAIP pastors in the Houston Area.\textsuperscript{37}

Throughout the years, Parker has prided himself on his resistance to change, especially with regard to the basic teachings of Pentecostal faith. In addition, his services remain as fluid as they have been for decades; prayer, praise, dancing, and preaching are interwoven throughout the service. When I visited his church in 1988, arriving at 8:30 PM, the congregation was in prayer. All remained “knee-bent” and “body-bowed” until 10:00 PM. Although the order changed, i.e., everyone sat in his seat, prayer continued. Testimonies, songs, shouts, praises, and message, and the offering all grew out of a continuum of prayer. This was perhaps one of the most fluid services I had ever experienced. Prayer and praise were the foundation for every event that occurred. The church did not once stop to change the order of service as is typically the case, e.g., there were no demarcations that allowed planning a trip to the water fountain. All was in one; one was in all. Even when the benediction was given, attendees were still in prayer. The benediction itself was five minutes in length. As the service was at least three and one-half hours long, time was not of the essence; members tipped in as late as 10:00 PM. Moreover, when I had earlier asked a woman what time service started, she stated with a serene smile, “We’re in prayer now, just whenever the Lord let’s us up”; thus, any visitor must be prepared to flow with the Spirit and the pastor.\textsuperscript{38}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{37} Pastors Roy Lee Kossie, Dorothy Summersville, Lura Guillory, Emanuel Gibson, Samuel Mingo, and Jesse Dunn and others are former members of Bible Way Church of Holiness.

\end{flushright}

On November 5, 1989, I made a second visit to Bishop Parker’s church to find him as constant in his theology based on prayer and supplication as he was when I first visited for observation. When I arrived at 2:30 P.M., the church parking lot and unpaved ditched embankments were both packed with cars. As I arrived late, I expected to be greeted at the door by the benediction. Instead a tall gentleman and his wife met me at the threshold; they were preparing to leave. When I asked if the service was over, a smirk enveloped the man’s face:

“Uhh...Noope.” “How long has he been preaching?” I asked.
“He hasn’t been long up.”
“And When did service start?”
“Ten”
“Ten?!” Sunday school or the regular service?
“Sunday School started at ten. The regular service started at around eleven.”

I breathed a laugh at the intended flexibility of the preposition around dropping easily and deliberately from the lips of this brother. I stepped through the front entrance and sat, I thought, inconspicuously, in the
Despite Parker’s strict pulpit decorum, he nonetheless supported women in ministry and nurtured young men who desired to pastor. \(^{39}\) Leola Crawford, who eventually founded The Miracle House of Prayer in 1955, served as Parker’s assistant pastor for several years. During Crawford’s tenure at Bible Way, the church experienced tremendous growth. She was an immediate beneficiary of the spiritual egalitarianism, freedom, and individualism encouraged by the Latter Rain Movement. Crawford became the first female pastor in Houston to embrace the movement after she left Parker’s church to establish The Miracle House of Prayer in the Heights district.

A woman of distinct serenity and sanctity, Pastor Crawford made an indelible impression on all acquainted with her. She was particularly known for her almost angelic appearance and gentle spirit; those who knew her claimed that she literally glowed. Many attest, however, that when “the Spirit of God was on her,” Crawford’s soft voice transformed itself into a commanding roar. After she had delivered her message, she would recover her quiet, saintly disposition. Like William Seymour and Bishop Falls, her journey toward greater spirituality started in Louisiana. Crawford moved to Houston, Texas, after escaping from an abusive marriage. A former member of Bishop J.H. Galloway’s COCIG church on Center Street, in the Houston Heights district, of Bishop H.W. Falls Zion Temple in Fourth Ward, and of Bishop J.L. Parker’s Bible Way Church of Holiness, Crawford “was led to God to go to a tent meeting on North Main and link Road where [the aforementioned] Elder J.D. Grace was preaching a message of deliverance. God had moved by His Spirit and sent a deliverer just as He sent Moses, to

\(^{39}\) Roy Lee Kossie, twenty-three years old at the time, and Walter Gipson joined with wives and young families. Kossie had become acquainted with Parker’s church after he and his wife experienced conversion during one of A.A. Allen’s revivals in Houston. Following conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit, Kossie and his wife worshipped with Parker until Kossie, soon an ordained minister, accompanied Pastor Leola Crawford to the Miracle House of Prayer to serve as her co-pastor. The years that Crawford and Kossie spent under Parker’s leadership were important ones.
Moses, to set His people free,” her daughter Menthola wrote. As she entered the tent she said “This is That!” Her daughter wrote that “She [Crawford] didn’t know what she had but the same thing she had was in action under the tent.” Crawford’s declaration “This is That!” alludes directly to her experience of having been fill with the Holy Ghost in her living room before ever being formally instructed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit through a pastor or spiritual leader. Because God revealed himself to Crawford in the privacy of her own home without her having received prior instruction, Crawford’s confidence in her being sanctioned to minister did not waiver.

The church services that Crawford started holding in her home, May 1, 1955, were especially popular because it seemed to worshippers that the Spirit of God flowed freely there. Saints (what converted members called themselves) sang spiritual songs spontaneously arranged, and shared testimonies, dreams, visions, and prophecies—both individual and congregational—with the pastor and congregants. Gifts were not confined to the pastor alone. Members who were spiritual could also prophesy to others and to the leader as well. Consider the following examples from her daughter’s account:

Through individual prophecy, on Oct 2, 1960, God said to Sis. Mary Johnson: I’m going to save your husband like I did Bro. Marshall Bell today...God moved again in prophecy through Bro. J. Clayton Williams to Sis. Mary Johnson saying that he had given her the gift of healing by the laying on of hands. She would speak to the discouraged and they would be encouraged. Prophecy went to our pastor spoken by Sis. G. saying : Don’t throw down the tables of stones like Moses did, if you do you will have to start over again.

Crawford was criticized for permitting democratic participation in the prophetic office during her services. Notwithstanding the controversy associated with her tendency

---

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 10.
to nurture spiritual independence in her members, Crawford’s gender still proved to be her greatest challenge. The first African American woman in Houston to pastor an independent Pentecostal church under the banner of the Latter Rain Movement, Crawford faced strong opposition from both men and women who held firmly that God did not call women to preach.\(^{46}\) One well-known minister is noted for having exclaimed to Crawford’s daughter during one of his messages: “You know God ain’t called no women preachers, Menthola.”\(^{47}\) Yet Crawford’s spirit proved indomitable; believing that God had indeed called her to the ministry, she continued her home church despite the lack of support from many of her brothers in the gospel.

Conversations with those who knew Crawford suggest that some male pastors were threatened by her magnetism and organizational style; Crawford’s concept of leadership was less hierarchical than that of their male counterparts.\(^{48}\) According to one of her opponents, “Crawford was ‘giving’ people the Holy Ghost,” the Pentecostal churches’ main attraction. The implication here was that somehow Crawford was not making seekers of the Holy Spirit “tarry” long enough to receive baptism in the Holy Ghost as was the case with saints of the Azusa outpouring of 1906. Recalling the 120 days spent by New Testament Christians in the Upper Room and at Azusa at the turn of the twentieth century, many Pentecostal pastors believed that the Holy Spirit would only manifest itself after lengthy prayer meetings and long fasts. They argued that those attending Crawford’s services experienced glossolalia (speaking in tongues) too quickly; for this reason, they berated her efforts.

With the exception of Quaker women, whom Quaker belief held were equal to men in the sight of God;\(^{49}\) Shaker women who benefited from “the Shaker insistence on gender

---

\(^{46}\) Research confirms that many early-mid twentieth-century black Pentecostal women founded churches, but often invited men to pastor them as did Lucy Farrow and Neely Terry.

\(^{47}\) Karen Kossie, Conversation with Townsend, April 19, 1995.

\(^{48}\) Scholars suggest that a more relaxed hierarchical structure is common among religions or churches founded by women. For more on this issue, see Charles Barfoot and Gerald Sheppard. “Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: The Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches.” *Review of Religious Research* 122 (1) 1980: 2—17.

equality" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and COGIC women, who were permitted to "teach" as opposed to "preach," independent Pentecostal women like Crawford were the first of their twentieth-century cohorts to assume ministerial roles. The oratorical skills of women of mainline denominations—Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Catholics—were generally restricted to praying aloud and giving missionary reports, despite their outnumbering men and supporting the church through innovative fund-raising and community efforts. Apart from homiletics, the difference between "teachers" and "preachers" was largely a geographical distinction. "Teachers," women who were called to ministry, basically delivered the sermons from the floor as opposed to the pulpit. In accord with many traditions that barred women from entering sacred places or touching sacred objects (childbirth and menstruation purportedly made them unclean), the pulpit was reserved for the brethren. The Latter Rain Movement theoretically offered women an unprecedented opportunity to pursue their spiritual callings without inhibition, yet men and women from more conservative religious backgrounds found it difficult to shed learned gender biases. Interestingly enough, research suggests that sexism in spiritual matters within the African American community might have been engendered through members’ encounter with European ecumenical cultures. For in African-based Afro-Caribbean and indigenous African religious cultures, women have always figured strongly among spiritual leaders. In Kingston, Jamaica, for example, the legendary Nanny lead black natives in an arduous campaign against British oppression in the 1800s. Indeed, the more African the religious form of expression, the more participation from women seems to be welcome.

Whether Crawford critics approved of her or not, she was thoroughly convinced through personal religious experiences that God, a Spirit, was neither male nor female.

51 Methodists ordain their first women preachers in 1948.
Rather than defend her position, however, Crawford quietly bore the discrimination and managed to transcend the narrow-mindedness and "unfreedom"53 advanced by her detractors. Given the movement's acephalic structure, who could relegate what Crawford and other women like her should do? Born in a different era from her feminist/womanist descendants Crawford did not explicitly challenge the masculinity of divinity and community54 or the male supremacy of the Judeo-Christian Bible.55 Nor did she set out to "de-form" language for the benefit of womankind; discuss "the brutality, exploitation, and manipulation" to which women were subjected "[a]t the hands of the father-god religious institutions";56 or reject spiritual dualism.57 She simply stood her spiritual ground and persevered despite opposition.58 Although Crawford was not an acknowledged feminist, one might successfully argue that she and other black women like her were fundamentally "womanist."

Womanism, unlike white feminist spirituality that is often separatist and antimale, affirms black women's interconnection with men through love and through a shared struggle for survival and wholeness.59 Womanism gives black women the freedom to explore their own history and culture, without being constrained by what white feminists have already identified as women's issues.60 Yet Pentecostal women like Crawford, who

53 Ibid.
60 According to Susan Starr Sered, Feminist Spirituality and Womanism differ from contemporary mainstream Christianity and from American civil religion in several ways. These women's religions embrace non-materialistic value systems, de-centralize organizations, on-going revelation, and female images of divinity. Found in Susan Starr Sered's Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions Dominated by Women, (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 1994) 27.
generally interpret scripture literally, part with both feminist and womanist traditions as both reject the Pentecostal's dichotomized and absolutist world view.\textsuperscript{61}

Although women ministers of the Latter Rain Movement maintained their distinct religious identity, their global concerns for family and relationship united them with the universal community of religious women.\textsuperscript{62} A former victim of domestic abuse, Crawford experienced firsthand the tragedies that sometimes accompany womanhood; she, therefore, demonstrated a special concern for young women in distress or transition, offering them food, lodging, counseling, and prayer when needed.\textsuperscript{63} The constant reality of women's suffering would have precluded her claiming that suffering and sickness do not exist, as do Christian Scientists. Yet she would agree in part with Christian Scientists' expressed disenchantment with the orthodox Christian idea of resignation to suffering as the will of God in this life. AAIP women believe that there are three basic types of suffering: (1) self-inflicted—Woman willingly enters an abusive relationship; (2) Satan-induced—Woman unknowingly enters an abusive relationship; (3) God-permitted.—A husband or child precedes her in death. Women and men alike were taught to fast and pray for grace and patience to endure self-induced trauma, and for strength to overcome suffering caused by the forces of evil. While suffering for disobedience and for the cause of Christ were distinguished in their view, both ultimately reinforced character. Different from adherents of the Feminist Spirituality Movement who believe that global suffering has been caused by patriarchy that brings with it militarism, rape, conquest, and disregard

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 33.

\textsuperscript{62} Susan Sered Starr argues that "[w]omen's religious lives are often closely linked to their interpersonal concerns. The network of relationships that seems most relevant to the understanding of women's religiosity is the family. Historical and ethnographic accounts describe of women's religious activity as embedded within, complementary to, enriching of, growing out of, and occasionally rebelling against women's familial involvement. An intense concern with the well-being of their extended families characterizes the religious lives of many women. Women who have a great deal invested in interpersonal relationships, and are denied access to venues of formal power, tend to associated with religious modes that stress relationships. 5—6.

\textsuperscript{63} Worthy Jennings and Barbara Kossie were beneficiaries of her kindness. The former was assisted by Crawford as she made a transitions from Louisiana to Houston. The latter remembered being warmly welcomed to convalesce in Crawford's home. Kossie recalls that Crawford prepared her three thoroughly blessed meals daily; such heartfelt, unselfish attention was therapeutic in and of itself.
for nature, and that the solution to global suffering is the dismantling of patriarchy; AAIP women like Crawford would simply blame the presence of evil on “the flesh and the devil”; Adam’s fall had left men and women vulnerable to the influences of each. Only salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit provide a way around or through suffering as men and women submit to each other and to the will of God as expressed in scripture.

Regardless of the difficulties Crawford faced because she was a woman, her dedication suggests that she had grown to understand intrinsically what Sheila Ruth contends of feminist spirituality: “Spirit...presupposes freedom, something which remains always unbridled and inviolate, a right to will, a right to press to prevail, to direct the self.” Accordingly, Crawford expressed her belief in the freedom of the spirit until the moment of her death—Crawford died while speaking in tongues.

Her example and that of her COGIC predecessors and AAIP contemporaries, first generation participants in the Latter Rain Movement, inspired a zealous new company of young pastors and evangelists in the Southwest. Because of the spiritual freedom and excitement accompanying the Latter Rain movement, all involved sought to go “higher in the Lord.” The spiritual elevation sorely desired, nonetheless, could only occur as they praised and sang:

For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. (Isaiah 51: 3)

---

64 Susan Starr Sered, 112.
65 Ruth, 47.
Chapter 5: "Higher, Lord!": Saints in Praise

“Religion’s like school. With Holiness, you graduate to go to college. When I was converted, I consented there was a height. But I sought a higher height. I moved from one degree of God’s blessing and power, and I found it’s just sweeter as you go along.”¹ Willie Mae Ford Smith

The affinity for movement expressed through the physical migration of African American Pentecostals is mirrored in one of the favorite praise songs of black Pentecostal believers of the early-to-mid twentieth century. In call-response fashion, congregants made an enthusiastic request for spiritual transcendence and elevation:

Higher, Lord!
Higher, Lord!
I wanna go higher!
Higher, Lord!
Lord, take me higher!
Higher, Lord!
I wanna go higher!
Higher, Lord...

Contrary to what many scholars have observed, the desire for upward spiritual mobility among AAP adherents was not wholly escapist. Rather than attempting to elude reality, saints (as AAP believers refer to themselves) used cathartic religious experiences to help them confront the exigencies of life with spiritual dignity and grace. Because AAP church services provided ample opportunities for attaining higher heights and deeper spiritual depths, saints often referred to church as their “filling station” or “hospital.” Given the manifold purposes that the church served, adherents did not find it strange to complement Sunday school and Sunday morning worship services with nightly church meetings, despite constant warnings from outsiders that their behavior was

excessive. Many saints recalled others telling them emphatically, “It don’t take all that!”—that being multiple church services per week, abstinence from drinking, smoking, and the general “works of the flesh.” The saints’ usual response was, “I know what it takes for me...Besides, I want to make heaven!” (i.e., go to heaven). Accordingly, women who worked at home sometimes added morning prayer services to their replete diet of spiritual enrichment and praise. The church services that they attended typically contained the following segments: altar prayer; praise and testimony service; selections by the choir (usually two); the sermon; offering; and prayer line.²

The basic elements found in the AAIP worship service of the 1940s and 1950s resembled those of black Pentecostal churches throughout the country and for most of twentieth century. New social opportunities afforded all African Americans, coupled with their increased exposure to a variety of worship and homiletic styles via radio, television, and the printed word, meant that African American Christians were better equipped to compare and contrast their private belief systems with those of others, regardless of denominational affiliation. Among AAIPs, although the incorporation of new ideas and the reinterpretation of old ones did not change the fundamental AAIP creed to “let the Lord have his way,” subsequent generations, particularly those of the post-civil rights era, began to develop a greater appreciation for organized knowledge in general. From the pulpit to the pew, as long as the believer held on to spiritual humility, education—formal and informal—did more to enhance than to harm whatever the aspect of Christian living and worship in question.

²The “prayer line” is comprised of congregants who wait to make their individual prayer requests known to the elders of the church, who then pray for the appropriate divine healing, deliverance, or intervention requested. If a pastor felt impressed to do so, (s)he sometimes calls a prayer line before the praise and testimony service began so that those who were particularly burdened might have their secular and spirituals needs addressed before the service continued. Pastors believed that praying for members before the service began facilitated supplicants’ ability to benefit from the praises sung and the sermon delivered.
Over time, the proliferation of ideas and worship styles meant that while the AAIPC church of the latter twentieth century still loves its “joyful noise,” it makes it with a kind of polished spontaneity that only education and its resulting benefits can afford. The latest of musical instruments skillfully played; timely sermons artfully delivered on a single theme; places of worship more beautiful than AAIPs of the early twentieth century could have imagined; large radio and television audiences and even stations themselves; along with a growing appreciation for Pentecostal (Africanist) worship styles among Baptists, Methodists, and Catholics all suggested to AAIPs that God had indeed been faithful. He had blessed them so thoroughly that they “forgot the shame of their youth” (Isaiah 54:4). With “tents” now enlarged and stakes strengthened (Isaiah 54: 2), AAIPs prepared themselves to receive spiritual and secular blessings that they would not have “room enough to receive” (Malachi 3: 10). Yet the journey to such abundance AAIPs still believe begins with prayer and praise.

I. Prayer: My Soul Says ‘Yes’

Marse Tom didn’t mind us singing in our cabins at night, but we’d better not let him catch us praying. Seems like niggers just got to pray. Half their life was spent in praying. Some nigger took his turn... to watch and see if Marse Tom was anywhere about; then they circle themselves on the floor in the cabin and prayed. They go moaning low and gentle. “Some day, some day, some day, this yoke is going to be lifted off of our shoulders.”

William Moore (Dallas, Texas)

As former slave William Moore insinuates above, some slave owners deemed prayer to be a subversive act, while the slaves themselves felt empowered by indulging in the forbidden. Born only a few years after the Emancipation and no doubt aware of the attitudes the some whites slave owners held towards prayer, both Seymour and Mason

---

1 Cited in Ronnie C. Tyler & Lawrence R. Murphy, The Slave Narratives of Texas, (Austin, TX: The Encino Press, 1974) 83. William Moore was 82-years-old when this interview was taken. He was a native of Selma, Alabama, who moved to Mexia, Texas, during the Civil War. Interviewers located Moore in Dallas.
deliberately sought after and nurtured a tradition of fervent prayer and supplication among Azusa participants and COGIC saints. As a young boy, often joining his mother and her neighbors in prayer, Mason prayed sincerely that God would grant him “above all things a religion like the one he had heard about from the old slaves and seen demonstrated in their lives.”  

Because of Mason’s emphasis on prayer, supplication had became an indefatigable tradition among COGIC adherents by the mid-twentieth century. Among first- and second-generation African American Independent Pentecostals prayer was viewed as the foundation for all secular and spiritual activity. Saints expressed their belief in the strength to be derived from prayer by a frequently quoted AAIP axiom: “Those who don’t pray, won’t stay; those who don’t fast, won’t last.” Believing that submission often preceded promotion or elevation, saints were taught to pray daily as an act of self denial. Prayer also offered saints experiences with the divine that were limitless and inexhaustible. Through prayer they communicated needs and found answers to them. The resulting spiritual disposition was one of inner peace and tranquillity. Perhaps indicative of a sustained post-slavery vindication, saints’ prayers themselves were rarely spoken quietly, for they believed in approaching the throne of grace boldly, with the degree of boldness being often inferred through volume and tone.

Praying allowed saints to embark upon individual quests towards what they understood to be the will of God for their lives. Pastors, wanting their members to mature spiritually, encouraged followers to pray at home. Accordingly, saints talked to God in their “prayer closets,” i.e., a designated place in the home where they could “get alone with God.” It was often during personal devotion that the supplicant found an answer or at least experienced cathartic spiritual resolve owing to their having “prayed through,” or accomplished their spiritual objective. Saints knew that they had prayed

---

through when “a release in the Spirit” was experienced. Yet a lingering “spirit of prayer” suggested that not all situations could be worked out in a single prayer meeting or hour of devotion. Correspondingly, many testified to having prayed for years before personal deliverance from a longstanding plight or condition or the salvation of loved one was made manifest. The more complex the issue, the more in depth and fervent the prayer. One pastor compared spiritual battles to boxing matches: “Some battles are short. You knock the devil out in one round. But others are tough— the enemy carries you fifteen.” In particularly stubborn situations, three-, seven-, twenty-one, and occasionally, forty-day fasts accompanied fervent prayer.

Prayer also provided time for saints to purify themselves spiritually. Because saints do not believe that they are saved once and forever (e.g., they believe that saints can backslide and “miss Heaven” in the process), dedicated ones pray constantly for spiritual and emotional cleansing because only prayer and devotion can help them to stay “unspotted from the flesh,” or clean in the sight of God. The profound spiritual cleansing that saints seek in prayer they believe can only be achieved as the person prays “out of himself,” i.e., relinquishes human intellect and steps outside the prison of personality. In other words, saints attempt to “let go and let God,” i.e., permit him to reveal both their strengths and weaknesses through the moral tenets outlined in scripture.

Saints often admit to having entered prayer feeling quite good about themselves and exited with a humbler disposition after the Spirit of God shed light on their inconsistencies. The reverse is also true. Like the publican who smote his breast humbly and found grace, supplicants who enter into prayer feeling contrite and repentant often leave encouraged and uplifted.

---

5 Such a feeling is best described as an inner sense of closure coupled with one of peace and tranquility, all of which suggest that the matter in question has been spiritually resolved. The person in prayer has only to wait for the physical manifestation of whatever the divine decision or course of action.
Prayer, moreover, helped saints to “maintain sensitivity to the Spirit,” as they termed it. Doing so kept them spiritually alert, ready to communicate with God on issues both great and mundane. This keen God-consciousness also allowed saints to intercede for each other spiritually. A given saint alludes to this phenomenon when (s)he tells another, “The Lord brought you to me in prayer” or “You’ve been on my heart for a while. Is everything O.K.?” The saint might also express his spiritual connection to others by simply carrying out a kind act that (s)he “felt led” to do. A saint might feel divinely inspired to buy someone groceries, to call or write a person to encourage him/her, or to “bless” an individual with a financial gift. In most such cases, saints are careful to ensure the recipient that (s)he acted not of his/her own volition but according to the Holy Spirit’s prodding. In many instances, however, saints do not “feel led” to tell the recipient that God has made the said saint a messenger, especially when the beneficiary might not be a convert. For sharing divine information verbatim with the unsaved would only serve to confuse matters, or worse, frighten off a probable candidate for salvation.

Prayer not only helped saints to be more attuned to the needs of others, but it also provided an occasion for authentic religious experiences. Through the years saints have testified of divine secrets shared with them in prayer. While visions seen or messages heard usually held personal application, dedicated saints often affirmed having received messages that confirmed the vision of others, inspired them to act, or cautioned them against a particular undertaking or course.

Equally as important, prayer and holy living gave saints “power over the devil,” especially when reinforced with fasting. Christ apprised his disciples of this fact when

---

6 Nothing was too trivial to pray about for many saints. Given their belief that God “uses the foolish things to confound the wise,” even the most apparently insignificant detail might indeed be of great spiritual import, e.g., what color to wear or which route to take to work. Such behavior appears extreme without understanding that the saint’s world, including himself, is both physical and spiritual. Because he or she might be given a spiritual assignment on a given day, accepting that the Spirit of God might occasionally make geographical and/or stylistic demands becomes a non-reflexive act when the saint “walks in the spirit,” i.e., maintains a life of prayer and fasting.

the latter encountered a possessed individual whom they could not cure. While having no problem “binding” the general “forces of darkness” commissioned to “kill, steal, and destroy,” more saints than not would rather leave face-to-face encounters with the devil to the experienced laymen and pastors accustomed to “conducting spiritual warfare.” This is certainly the case with exorcisms. Although saints have a basic appreciation for the spiritually dramatic, most would concur that exorcisms are hardly entertaining to watch.\(^8\) Often accompanied by unexplained facial and vocal distortion, foaming at the mouth, vomiting, writhing, and levitations that defy the laws of gravity and challenge the strength of several able-bodied men and women at time—only those who are certain of being “prayed up” attempt to participate. Because exorcisms may frighten children and unsuspecting onlookers, the person in need of deliverance is taken to another part of the church whenever possible in order to complete the process.\(^9\) It should be noted, however, that saints do not confuse medically diagnosed cases of epilepsy, dementia, schizophrenia or Tourette syndrome with demon possession. Yet they are not willing to part with their belief in “the powers of darkness,” particularly after having witnessed behavioral changes, profound and lasting, in individuals who have undergone an exorcism. For this reason, they are particularly cautious of multiple personality theories advanced by modern psychology. For the scripture affirms that a person may indeed be possessed

---

\(^8\) Saints base their belief in demon possession primarily on New Testament cases in which Christ, his disciples, and Paul cast out evil spirits out of individuals who were helplessly controlled by them. Both the New and Old Testaments suggest the following about demon spirits (fallen angels): (1) they are subject to believers (sincere Christians); (2) in some cases, casting out certain demons requires advanced fasting and prayer because some spirits are more powerful than others; (3) demon spirits, like angels, differ in rank; (4) they may possess not only men but animals as well; and (5) they will eventually be cast into the bottomless lake of fire prepared by God for them and Lucifer, their fallen leader.

Even though saints generally believe that the spirit world is divided into two camps—one good, the other evil—a nebulous side of spirituality latent with the African religious belief in the presence of ancestral spirits may have occasion to surface during casual tale-sharing sessions. However, saints are taught that such visitations are mere demonic impersonations enacted to confuse or misguide the unsuspecting. To avoid deception, saints are taught to “try every spirit to see that it be of God” least they Satan, adept at presenting himself as an angel of light, dupes them.

\(^9\) For various reasons, however, not every demonic is cured instantaneously. Some deliverances take hours to achieve.
with multiple spirits as in the cases of Mary Magdalene, “out of whom was cast seven
devils,” and the Gerasene demoniac, out of whom was cast “a legion” of demons, i.e., one
thousand or more—enough to drive an entire heard of swine to its death. AAIPs basic
approach to such matters, nonetheless, is precautionary. As some would argue, “It’s just
good to pray anyway.”

When the pastor felt that the entire church needed rededication or when the church
was facing an important historical juncture, (s)he would sometimes call a very special
prayer service called a “shut-in.” Based on a biblical account in which New Testament
Christians held an all-night prayer vigil for Paul’s release from jail, the shut-in, held at
church, is at least a twenty-four prayer service held during which saints take turns
praying in relay fashion for a variety of needs. The objective is to ensure that heaven is
bombarded with their fervent requests. Shut-ins are usually accompanied by fasting and a
quiet disposition to ensure humility and contrition.

AAIP saints’ free-flowing prayers were different from black Baptists’ recitations,
richly embued with metaphor and simile. Determined to move in the spirit, AAIP saints
rarely if ever used prayer books. Many believed, as with printed praises, that preset
prayers locked out the possibility of instantaneous inspiration from God. The fact that
they were even printed indicated that they had taken their place among things inanimate.
This presentest approach to the divine meant that saints, “soldiers” in the army of the
Lord, were conditioned to be ready “at all times” to render service even in prayer, “24—
7,” as they would say—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Congregational prayer meetings differed from tranquil intervals set aside for
personal devotion. In addition to designated prayer days, altar prayer at church usually
convened an hour to fifteen minutes before the regular service began. In call-response
fashion, altar prayer was led by the pastor, church mothers, deacons, or “seasoned”
saints, i.e., those who had proven to be steadfast in their convictions. Congregational
prayer in AAIP churches was often initiated via a devotional chant composed by Bishop Charles Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, the spiritual birthplace of the basic AAIP worship mode: “Yes.” The simple but powerful word expressed the key to saints’ experiencing oneness with God: total submission of the will. Self denial was certainly uncomfortable and sometimes even painful, but necessary. A simple “yes” from a heart reinforced with fasting and prayer was sufficient. After the chant, the prayer leader made requests known to God as others responded with “Yes, Lord” or with a verbatim repetition of his/her melodic plea. Individual prayer requests were usually addressed during the prayer line which was called either at the end of the prayer or church service. Similar to the Gregorian chant, but without any verifiable link to it, the prayer was sung in a minor key with most of the melody confined to a single octave. The length of intervalic leaps reflected the fervency of the supplication made. At high moments in the prayer, both the prayer leader and participants enriched their melodic requests with body percussion and/or rhythmic lateral sways. Others would sometimes stand and pace the floor as the leader continued to detail not only the needs of the saints gathered, but of the community, nation, and world.

Participation in fervent prayer, however, was not confined to the Pentecostal churches of the twentieth century. Moreover, among African Americans and blacks of the diaspora, the history of emotive worship is far older than the African Americans encounter with Protestant evangelicalism. That European missionaries, regardless of their religious affiliation, found African slaves to be excessively emotional suggests that for the missionaries such expressions of spiritual abandon were not commonly accepted. As Karen Armstrong suggests in *A History of God*, leaders and philosophers of the West

---

10 On the other hand, extreme physical expressions of self-denial such as self-flagellation would have been strongly denounced as borderline suicidal.
11 See the transcription of a prayer service at Bishop J.L. Parker’s church, 1989.
have almost always looked upon spiritual abandon with caution if not suspicion.\textsuperscript{12} Recognizing the danger of opening the mind and spirit to the unknowable, many believed that experiencing religious ecstasy was to be reserved for a special few. The reverse was often true among people of African decent. While the religious leader certainly retained the most powerful position among those who worshipped with him, all were welcomed to feel the spirit. As early as the eighteenth century in Jamaica, for example, Methodist missionaries complained about the emotionalism that they found among the slaves whom they attempted to convert. That white Methodists of the same era were attacked by elite churches for extreme emotionalism suggests that the expressive worship they encountered among blacks surpassed even their own spirited worship mode.

Black scholar J. Saunders Redding has argued that enthusiastic prayer is a characteristic of most African American churches. Redding observed that the God of many “Negroes had a terrifying immediacy as material provider and protector.”\textsuperscript{13} Reared Episcopalian, Redding’s perception of God differed, yet the prayers of the worshippers he described “impressed [him] with their concreteness, their concern for the everyday.” For “they prayed for bread, not in a general, symbolic...sense, but for specific bread and meat for specific occasions...They wanted clothes and they asked for them. They wanted pitiful but specific sums of money. They wanted protection from their real enemies.”\textsuperscript{14} Saints made everything a subject of prayer: loved ones, bosses, enemies, friends, and countries.

Research suggests that the idea of a personal god who addressed needs mundane and great was not foreign to transplanted African slaves. However, as the slaves were culturally and spiritually transformed by their western experience, the belief in a personal

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
god per individual was replaced among many by faith in a single personal savior of all. Even while saints believe that angels are assigned to believers, they would never pray to an angel directly as might be the case in belief systems allowing for a mediatory "chi" or personal god to whom one offers oblations or blood sacrifices. Prayer, praise, and supplication are all reserved for the Almighty himself who then delegates angelic beings to supply a given need.

Congregational and personal prayer were also complemented by small group prayer meetings. Many AAIP churches organized "prayer bands" from house to house that were usually headed by seasoned saints. They functioned as spiritual appendages to the ministries to which organizers belonged. Because of their small, intimate nature, they constituted an effective way to acquire new converts and to personalize the salvation message. As long as converts were introduced to the larger congregation, pastors were generally in favor of prayer bands.

II. Praise and Testimony Service:

A. The Praise Service

As song-singing served to distinguish English evangelicals from their Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist predecessors, so did the praise and testimony service distinguish Pentecostals, descendants of Watts’s and Wesley’s hymnodic evangelicalism and of African forms of religious expression, from their Baptist and Methodist brothers and sisters. Having inherited shouts, hand-clapping and foot-stomping, jubilee songs, and

---

15 The angels of the Lord encamp round about them who fear him.
17 The use of the home as a birthplace for religious groups is not new to American religious history. For example, New Englander Anne Hutchinson started antinomian services in her home. As her banishment to Rhode Island indicates, however, her spiritual leadership was not well received by the religious establishment.
18 When some band leaders began to use gatherings to form churches of their own, pastors began to discourage their formation.
ecstatic worship from plantation "praise houses," AAIPs believed wholeheartedly in "making a joyful noise unto the Lord." It is perhaps this joyful noise, created by high instrumental and vocal volume, that initially stuns visitors of Pentecostal churches. In most cases, newcomers are greeted by resounding music and stentorian singing long before they enter the sanctuary. Affirming the black Pentecostal preference for intense volume during a visit to a service at Mount Zion COGIC church in Canada, Paul McIntyre noted that a "very high level of noise...prevail[ed] throughout the meeting." 21

McIntyre traced the predilection for hearty resonance among black Pentecostals to Africa, arguing that "[e]xcess noise has always been associated in the Western mind, not only with modern Pentecostalism and its antecedents... but also with at least some aspects of African culture as well." 22 He cited three accounts of European visitors to African to support his observation. One involved Richard Dobson, who in 1623 commented upon his encountering a huge resounding xylophone in the Gambia District: "[t]he sound that proceeds from this instrument is worth observing for we can heare it a good English mile." 23 Another case included Edward Bowdich who some two hundred years later remarked upon entering the Ashanti capital, Kumasi: "Upwards of 5000 people met us with awful bursts of martial music...all exerted with a zeal bordering on phrenzy, to subdue us by the first impression." 24 The final case involved Gorer who in 1930s made

---

22 Ibid.
23 Cited in McIntyre, 28.
24 Ibid., 29.
frequent references to the outbursts of noise he encountered during a fetish-worshipping ceremony observed in the ancient Kingdom of Dahomey. McIntyre concludes then that the pattern of noise-making found in black Pentecostal churches is at least “co-incident with practices in African cultures that have attracted the attention of Westerners over a long period of time.”

The praise and testimony service, with all of its African-derived noise-making, also remained the most popular segment of the worship service not only because it allowed adherents to recover primal speech, primal piety, and primal hope, but also because it nurtured the black Pentecostal’s penchant for spiritual individualism. Punctuated by both song and dance, this portion of the service was usually led by an experienced member whom the pastor selected. The Praise Conductor, as he or she was called, opened the service with a scripture reading that congregants repeated as they stood at attention. He or she then invited members of the congregation to sing songs of praise and testify at random. All who wanted to testify stood and waited their turn to “tell of His goodness.” Depending on how much the Lord had done, this portion of the service lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour and a half. Full of spontaneity and deliberately so, it was often the most intriguing and the most lengthy portion of the service. Saints in praise have always evoked wonder among blacks from mainline denominations. As one author noted, they constituted “a fantasy world...beyond” the “ken” of “millions of black Americans” because founders insisted on maintaining African modes of spiritual expression. The experience of one Baptist-born African American nurse while visiting a sanctified church suggests as much. “To me,” she says “it’s like

---

25 Ibid.
going to a movie...They just amazing."

Her fascination with saints in worship was also mirrored by other African Americans who had been brought up in mainline denominations. Seeking to be entertained by the boundless dancing and singing of Pentecostals in worship, African American scholar J. Saunders Redding reminisced that he and his teenage friends would "mock...at the crazy singing and shouting, and the uninhibited behavior of members in religious ecstasy." The mode of worship that Redding found in Pentecostal churches greatly contrasted with the conservative worship style found in the Episcopal church of his early childhood. According to Redding, "[t]here was never any shouting or 'getting happy' among [them] in church" or "none of that ecstatic abandon that set men and women jumping and dancing and screaming in the aisles." The difference that Redding perceived was witnessed by saints as well. The opportunity to praise God freely is precisely what drew many saints to prefer Pentecostal modes of worship. They were not bothered by the purported indignity of the act, especially given that King David, one of their favorite biblical characters, danced and leaped so spiritedly that he shed his clothes in public. Although David's wife, Micah, misunderstood his emotional display of gratitude and thanksgiving as a carnal advertisement for his "maidservants," a loathsome thought in her estimation, David insisted that he danced "before the Lord." (II Samuel 6: 20-23)

A charismatic song of the 1980s expresses the same appreciation for a physical response to a spiritual rapture. Note however that singing, dancing, and praising are prescribed by the structure and lyrics of the song:

28 Ibid.
29 Cited in Berry, 49.
30 Ibid.
31 While Joseph E. Holloway's Africanism in American Culture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) aims to provide "a new and comprehensive examination of Africanism in America and especially in the United States from historical, linguistic, religious, and artistic perspectives" (ix), Robert L. Hall's contribution to the work "African Religious Retentions in Florida" (98—118) elides any direct reference to black holiness-Pentecostal worship styles. What is most remarkable about Hall's oversight is that it occurs in "Spirit Possession and Ritual Ecstatic Dance", an area of discussion in which black Pentecostals—when mentioned at all—are generally cited.
Style: Greek; Rhythm: 2/4; Tempo: Spirited.

When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will sing like David sang.
When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will sing like David sang.
I will sing like David
Sing like David
Sing like David s-a-n-g!
I will sing like David!
Sing like David!
Sing like David sang!

When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will clap like David clapped. (clap, clap, clap)
When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will clap like David clapped. (clap, clap, clap)
I will clap like David. (clap, clap)
Clap like David. (clap, clap)
Clap like David c-l-a-p-p-e-d
I will clap like David. (clap, clap)
Clap like David (clap, clap)
Clap like David clapped.

When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will dance like David danced. (stomp, stomp, stomp)
When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will dance like David danced. (stomp, stomp, stomp)
I will dance like David danced. (stomp, stomp, stomp)
I will dance like David. (stomp, stomp)
Dance like David. (stomp, stomp)
Dance like David d-a-n-c-e-d
I will dance like David. (stomp, stomp)
Dance like David (stomp, stomp)
Dance like David danced.

Tempo: Slow

When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will praise like David praised.
When the spirit of the Lord falls upon my heart,
I will praise like David danced.
I will praise like David danced.
I will praise like David.
Praise like David.
Praise like David d-a-n-c-e-d
I will praise like David.
Praise like David
Praise like David praised.

The kind of praise that David offered in II Samuel 6: 20-23, however, as well as the spirited praise that saints of the Latter Rain Movement preferred, was spontaneous. Rarely occurring in isolation, singing, dancing, and praising together formed a layered experience that was not only harmonically rich but rhythmically invigorating.

Many writers have contended that the appreciation for or rejection of ecstatic worship is largely a reflection of social class, although many saints would beg to differ. After witnessing a woman dance at St. Paul’s A.M.E. in Jacksonville, Florida, Daniel Alexander Payne, bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church opposed the ring shout and attempted to eradicate all forms of religious dance. Payne was further disturbed to learn that even the members of a church led by a Wilberforce-educated pastor danced at an A.M.E. "Love Feast." In Payne’s estimation, the educated should have been better behaved. The fact the pastor of the church was educated but still allowed for an open expression of praise suggests his having understood intrinsically what many Pentecostals firmly believe: worldly demarcations, i.e., class, race, gender—dissipate when the worshipper dethrones the ego and all of its trappings to embrace the divine. As

---

32 This does not mean that saints did not practice a variety of dance steps when away from church. In fact, practicing the shout was often a form of entertainment for the children of saints who, forbidden to dance to secular music, often expended their youthful energy “playing church.” During such sessions they imitated the dances of saints and other aspects of the service. Interestingly enough, it was not uncommon for one or another youngster to become enraptured by the spirit despite the original intent of their staged shouting session. Gospel singer/songwriter Shirley Caesar recounts that such an incident occurred in her own childhood when she was overcome by the spirit while she and a younger sibling were playing church. Caesar’s brother rush to tell their mother who then assured him that Caesar was simply praising God.


Bishop Carlton Pearson shouted recently during one of his sermons: "You can't educate me out of this!" (this being the desire to worship God without inhibition).\textsuperscript{35} To saints like Pearson, the insistence on decorum in worship has little scriptural evidence to support it. They argue that the spiritual highs experienced freely in church are certainly superior to secular means of transcending. Unlike alcohol and drugs, they do not induce hangovers, break up families, or cause automobile accidents. Nor do they incite uncontrollable urges to steal, kill, abuse, or destroy. The saints' spiritual, high, then is not only "comely for the upright" (beneficial to those who worship God), but a blessing to the nation, even the world.

Praise without a simultaneous and rhythmic admixture of singing, shouting, clapping, and stomping would have been inconceivable for many early black Pentecostals for whom spirited musical expression and worship were necessarily integrated. Performative boundaries were crossed as well. For while many songs contained a part for a soloist or leader, the act itself was shared; the caller depended upon the respondents, and the respondents, the caller. Inextricably linked, both gave life to the song. The call-response format provided not only for mutual responsibility between caller and respondents, but it also encouraged role-switching between the two parties. The highly participatory element in black Pentecostal music left no room for passive gazing; all were expected to "help" their brothers and sisters "lift the Savior up."

The praise and testimony service also provided an opportunity for members to bond with each other. Unlike in many traditional Christian churches, while saints are generally supportive of praise songs, they do not wait for directives to rise in unison. Individuals from within the congregation initiate their songs of preference and others join in support of his/her personal praise. Accordingly, songs are rarely if ever sung from hymnals. Again reflecting a predilection for non-deliberate worship, saints felt printed

\textsuperscript{35} Carlton Pearson, Higher Dimensions, \textit{Praise The Lord!}
songs somehow interfered with freedom of the spirit and spontaneous worship. The degree to which this attitude is ingrained in many African American Pentecostals is reflected in the fact that it took the largest and most established black Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God in Christ, founded in 1907, a full seventy-five years to part from its beloved oral tradition and publish a collection of its hymns: Yes, Lord!: Church of God in Christ Hymnal (1982).36 This does not mean that no individual Pentecostal composers preserved their music; some did, especially upon realizing the economic and historical value of doing so. Henry Date's Pentecostal Hymns, "A Winnowed Collection for Evangelistic Services," published in 1895 may be the earliest known Pentecostal hymnal.37 Within three years of its publication, the collection had purportedly "found its way into every town and hamlet in the land."38 In the early twentieth-century, Thoro Harris published Full Gospel Songs (1923), whose cover caption read "Baptism in the Holy Ghost," undoubtedly targeted sanctified congregations.39

Yet most saints would have felt uncomfortable claiming ownership of congregational songs "born of the spirit" and "for the edification of the body" (i.e. sent to the singer/messenger to be share with the congregation). Moreover, as with their cousin COGIC worshippers, dependence upon printed hymnals was tantamount to leaning on the arms of flesh, an action certain to "grieve the spirit"40 in the long run. Thus to be sure that God was glorified, saints waited to be moved by the spirit before they sang or testified.

38 Ibid. 219.
39 Ibid.
B. Praise Him! : Hymnody in the AAIP-C Church

The birth of black Pentecostal praise music, with its African and Euro-American vestiges, was synchronous with the late-nineteenth-century exodus of saints from traditional black churches. The musical elements, performance modalities, and much of the instrumentation found in early black Pentecostal music are residual of West African musical cultures. Given the endurance of certain African components such as shouting, drumming, and the preference for communal musical expression, the existence of African-American musical connections to Africa, no matter how distant, can hardly be denied. The music of enslaved Africans was transformed over time, however, as musicians and audiences alike familiarized themselves with new non-African instruments (e.g., the guitar), materials (white hymns), and contexts for musical expression (the “praise houses” of southern plantations and interracial open-air camp meetings of the second Great Revival).

Praise music constituted a perfect meshing of African and American cultural influences, for while it recalled the African predilection for communal worship it also teamed with the democratic spirit of nineteenth-century American Protestant Christianity. Although saints did not go to great lengths to classify their praises, the underlying expectation was that the praises be jubilant, expressive “songs of deliverance.” (Psalm 32: 7) As many saints colorfully asserted, “the Lord ain’t coming back for no cold, dead church”; therefore, the praises sung needed to communicate warmth (Holy Ghost “fire”) and life (resurrection power). Owing to their spirited and communal nature, then, Pentecostal praise songs even became the foundation for the black gospel music

---

tradition in America, with the Church of God in Christ (headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee) having the greatest impact.\textsuperscript{42}

In the early stages of Pentecostalism, the penchant for participatory praise among black adherents was a judicious social choice; it was perhaps key to their survival. Because of their departure from tradition, saints were largely viewed as errant exiles by their mainline brothers and sisters, a “strange” people indeed, one that not a few believed would perish in their spiritual wilderness. In order to initiate a positive interpretation of their misunderstood yet sincere spiritual journey, saints needed to nurture a sense of belonging amongst themselves that was profound and pervasive. The old, the young, the feeble, and the robust—all who had breath needed reassurance that their praises mattered. Heeding the scripture which admonished them to “[s]peak to [themselves] in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [their] heart[s] to the Lord” (KJV: Ephesians 5: 19), saints—the ultimate membranophones—then became their own first instruments of praise; clapping their hands, stomping their feet, and singing to the tops of their voices, they vowed to “praise him in the morning, praise him in the noonday, and praise him ‘til the sun [went] down.”

Saints’ willing journey toward spiritual perfection as well as their on-going desire to go higher in the Lord was reflected in their songs. Their praises foretold that movement—swift, invigorating, and purposeful—would permeate the content and form of their worship. When black Pentecostals initiated their unprecedented journey in the late-nineteenth century, nonetheless, their separation from mainline churches and eventual distancing from white control not only occasioned unlimited experimentation with Euro-American forms and melodic structures, but also facilitated the re introduction of African elements that might have otherwise been lost to the acculturative process. Different from

traditional black religious leaders who had launched an ardent campaign in the late-nineteenth century to have parishioners reject anything faintly suggestive of “heathen” Africa, especially the drum and the dance, Pentecostal pastors encouraged saints to reclaim them despite the dawning of the modern age.

As saints moved to eastern, midwestern, and more southwestern parts of the United States, even to Canada and the Caribbean during their Post Emancipation migration, so did their contextual and stylistic preferences. So constant was their cultural embrace that by the 1930s, when black mainline denominational churches were uncomfortably straddled between white mainline Protestant and southern Africa-American religious rituals,43 African American Pentecostals had already established a history of uninhibited praise and worship, each of which was complemented by creative experimentation, contagious rhythms, and instrumentation.

As demonstrated in the works of Henry Date and Thoro Harris,44 some Pentecostal songs predate the gospel compositions of Thomas Dorsey and his contemporaries who began to revolutionize black sacred music among mainline African American Christians in the 1920s.45 Relying almost solely upon scripture for guidance in music matters, saints used Psalm 100 as the basic prescription and purpose for their praises:

> Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
> Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
> Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
> Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

---

44 See page 127 of this chapter.
For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

In keeping with most evangelical revival movements, the Pentecostal movement has always been accompanied by a proliferation of spirited songs and hymns. They provide entry into the saints' world view. Literally born from the soul, the songs that adherents sang provided just as much information about their lives as did personal testimony. For saints constantly stressed living the life reflected in the lyrics of songs. Although traditional American hymns (uplifting ones) remained a part of their repertoire, many of the praises that saints sang were composed during personal devotion or spontaneously during the service. Saints' emphasis on divine inspiration as opposed to academic preparation is thoroughly exemplified via their ready creations of praises.

Nineteenth-century German musicologist Richard Wallaschek's argument in *Primitive Music* (1893) that black songs were "mere imitations of European compositions which negroes have picked up and served up again with slight variations" lost its impetus when confronted with the melodic structure, rhythm, and tempo of African American Pentecostal praise songs; no European equivalent to them exists. Generally upbeat, hopeful, and full of quick polyrhythmic combinations, most of the praises sung during the praise service contained a contagious melodic line that was easily learned. Given the transdenominational embrace of Pentecostal hymnological styles among those who appreciate black gospel music, choirs including the LA, Mississippi, and Azusa Mass Choirs; and soloists like Donnie McClurkin have begun to reintroduce old praise songs to eager listening audiences. Yet most Pentecostal songs remain to be compiled as printed texts.

---

Apart from the rehearsed renditions of Pentecostal choirs and/or soloists, praise and worship songs were communally introduced and spontaneously enjoyed, although the uninhibited expression that they encouraged was frowned upon by many Methodists and Baptists of the early twentieth century.⁴⁹ Among Pentecostals of the 1940s and 1950s, although one individual initiated a given praise there was no guarantee that he or she would finish it; others would take turns leading the congregation through thematic variations around a simple refrain (ABAB form):

**Caller 1:** I Get Joy When I Think About...
**Response:** ...What He’s Done for Me
**Caller 1:** I Get Peace When I Think About
**Response:** What He’s Done For Me
**Caller 2:** I Know, I Know
**Response:** What He’s Done For Me
**Caller 2:** You Can’t Tell It, Let Me Tell It
**Response:** What He’s Done For Me...

Michael Hayes cogently equated this spontaneous vocal sharing with jazz:

Improvisatory in nature and simple in structure, these songs of praise are rendered differently each time they are sung. Black Pentecostals sing their praise songs in a way similar to the way jazz musicians play their instruments. Just as jazz musicians have an inventory of jazz riffs and chord progressions to call upon, so have the Pentecostal praise leaders an inventory of familiar calls at their disposal....Black Pentecostals learn their praise songs by rote via the medium of oral transmission, and it is the spiritual mood of the moment that determines what is sung or played.⁵⁰

It is this spontaneous rendering of music, open for participation by the willing and ready, that helps to ensure that Pentecostal praise services remain vibrant and inclusive.

---

⁴⁹ Oliver, 174.
The themes of their praise songs were expected to be just as invigorating as their rendition. For while the songs of the saints’ enslaved ancestors expressed a desire for physical freedom, for “justice in the judgment upon his betrayers,” for “a tactic battle... to gain an eminent future,” the praise songs of the saints were necessarily hopeful and strength-building. Having long left what they described as “cold, dead churches,” they claimed victory from sickness, spiritual depravity, and economic duress:

Victory, Victory Shall Be Mine
Victory, Victory Shall Be Mine
If I fold My Peace and Let the Lord Fight My Battles
Victory, Victory Shall Be Mine...

Praise Him
Praise Him
Praise Him in the morning
Praise Him in the noon day
Praise Him
Praise Him
Praise Him when the sun go down...

The Pentecostal hymnological focus on spiritual as opposed to physical freedom distinguished them early on from their black Baptist and Methodist contemporaries. As Jon Michael Spencer confirms in *Black Hymnody*, not only did “the Holiness churches and their Pentecostal successors ... preserv[e] the musical legacy of the enslaved African in north American, while the black Methodists and Baptists rejected it,” but they also “led the way in reinterpreting these songs of longing for this-worldly liberation as having otherworldly meaning.” Using the Pentecostal reinterpretation of the traditional gospel hymn “Jesus I’ll Never Forget” to highlight this distinction, Spencer notes that the aforementioned song became a favorite among black Pentecostals because “it followed the

---

New Testament lead in construing the biblical exodus as a spiritual event (liberation from sin) rather than as a physical event (freedom from human forms of bondage):

Jesus, I’ll never forget when way down in Egypt’s land,
How you brought me out with almighty outstretched hand,
Broke the bonds of sin and set me free,
Gave me joy and peace and victory.

Chorus:
Jesus I’ll never forget what you’ve done for me,
Jesus I’ll never forget how you set me free,
Jesus I’ll never forget how you brought me out,
Jesus I’ll never forget, no never.

As with black spirituals, heaven, hell, and judgment were also central ideas in the saints songs. When compared to eternity in hell for unrighteous living, leading a life of self-denial was hardly an unfair demand in the minds of saints. Besides, as the following song suggests, they did not expect to make the journey toward spiritual perfection alone; Christ was there to help them:

Jesus gettin’ us ready for that great day
Jesus gettin’ us ready for that great day
Jesus gettin’ us ready for that great day
Who shall be able to stand?
Sinners will be runnin’ in that Great day
Sinners will be runnin’ in that Great day
Sinners will be runnin’ in that Great Day.
Who shall be able to stand?

Some songs also contained the saints’ interpretation of the devil as a persistent predator. In such songs he is referred to in the third person: “Satan’s on my track and he’s trying to turn me back.” Yet Satan was always defeated: “I beat the devil running and I’m so glad.” Other songs, however, were sung directly to him. Consider the following song. Particularly popular among the saints, it demonstrates their belief that

---

human beings are inherently spiritual creatures, destined to be led by one spirit or another. The Christian, in their minds, has made the wisest choice when (s)he chooses to be led by the Spirit of God:

Satan, I put you out.
Satan, I put you out
Satan, I put you out
Of my life
I don’t want you no more
I don’t want you no more
I don’t want you no more
In my life
The Holy Ghost took your place
The Holy Ghost took your place
The Holy Ghost took your place
In my life
I don’t want you no more
I don’t want you no more
I don’t want you no more
In my life

Saints praises also indicated the degree to which salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit completely altered their inner lives. The lyrics to the following praise suggest the profundity and scope of the psycho-spiritual revelation that adherents experienced after conversion. The theme of spiritual renewal and freedom it expresses suggests that converts were no longer controlled by old habits that had proven detrimental to both the body and soul (e.g., alcohol and cigarettes).

Call: My Mind, My Mind
Response: My Mind is gone
Call: My Mind, My Mind
Response: My Mind is gone
Call: That ‘ole mind I use to have
Response: My mind is gone
Call: That ‘ole mind I use to have
My mind is gone...
Affirmation of a renewed mind was coupled with a revived spirit and a general appreciation for what saints described as “the joy of the Lord.” Gleaning the purpose of “joy” directly from scripture, saints believed it to be their source of strength. Given the stubbornness of socio-political oppression and memories of even more dangerous times for blacks, joy was actively sought. Thus despite the ravages of economic depression and the stubborn reality of racism, victory was always just a refrain away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm so glad</td>
<td>Jesus lifted me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan had me bound</td>
<td>But Jesus lifted me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saints often testify to being lifted by the songs sung during the praise service. “Tiredness left my body,” an elderly saint might say. “I’m no longer depressed,” another may add. “My headache is gone!” affirms yet another. All agree in short that no earthly remedy can surpass “a good dose of the Holy Ghost.” Given that black in the 1940s meant political, social, and economic disfranchisement in the Jim Crow South and continued marginalization in subsequent years, praise songs that put the devil out, dispelled sickness, and renewed minds encouraged the continuous expression of spiritual freedom.

Saints also sang in tongues, or in primal speech patterns. These praises were considered to be the most personal of musical compositions that an individual worshipper

---

could offer. For the language in which the worshipper sang was communicated by the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the person sang the perfect praise to God, one that the singer him/herself might not have understood intellectually, but from which (s)he gained spiritual, moral, and even physical strength to endure. This phenomenon is experienced not only by single individuals, but groups as well. Saints term this kind of praise, especially when accompanied by singing and tongues, "high praise." During such moments almost everyone is spiritually enraptured yet musically connected as each congregant sings tonal and rhythmic variations of the praise phrases "Hallelujah," "We praise You, Lord," and others. A single major triad usually serves as a melodic altar from which individual yet harmonic praises of gratitude and thanksgiving are offered. Believing praise to be "comely for the upright" (and a lubricant for the "uptight"), praise constitutes a powerful tool in "spiritual warfare." Saints are therefore constantly encouraged to praise the Lord, for they believe literally and unequivocally that praise "confuses the enemy" and that "God inhabits the praises of his people." Praising God, thus, "puts the devil on the run" while granting the worshipper certain audience with the Most High himself. During moments when a corporal spiritually elevation occurs, a kind of leveling takes place in that pastors and leaders often seem to relinquish titles as all fuse into a single, reverential human mass, face-to-face with a presence that renders conventional hierarchy insignificant.

55 The saints’ concept of "spiritual warfare" is based on the Apostle Paul’s avowal that “[w]e wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12, KJV) In order to survive the bellicose state of the spiritual universe saints are required to “[p]ut on the whole armour of God” they might be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11, KJV) Ephesians 6: 14—18 offers additional “martial” instructions: “(13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand; (14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked; (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (19) And for me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.”
The humbling that saints experience they reference with those of biblical characters Adam, Isaiah, and others, who became painfully aware of their inherent "nakedness," imperfections, and limitations when in counsel with the divine. Saints relate the spiritual elevation to that of Paul, who noted being lifted in the spirit to "the third heaven," a vantage point from which he heard "things that were not lawful to be uttered" (that few would have understood). It is often during such moments—when congregants exchange the security of human reason for "garments of praise"—that the miraculous occurs.

C. Instrumentation:

Saints enhanced their optimistic praises with creative instrumentation. While Psalm 100 outlines the purpose for their worshipful songs; Psalm 150 suggests exactly what should be their subject and the means for their communication:

Praise ye the Lord: Praise God in his sanctuary:
praise him in the firmament of his power
praise him for his mighty acts:
praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise
him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord.

Given the inaccessibility of harps and psalteries (an ancient musical instrument resembling a zither), saints used drums, tambourines, triangles, scrub boards, pans, castinets (namely in the Southwest) bass guitars, organs and pianos to accompany their praises. When one considers the rich instrumentation that saints welcomed,
understanding why African Americans found Pentecostalism attractive takes no grand leap of faith. Saints’ bible-based prescription for praise encouraged the active participation of everyone, children included; life in every form responded to a command to praise God. Unbound by the staunch decorum and eurofocal inclinations of traditional black churches where the piano and organ defined the limits of instrumental music, saints were free to used whatever would help them “rock Zion.”

Their all-inclusive liberality paved the way for each person to await divine inspiration as (s)he played whatever the instrument available. Having no problem believing that God would indeed manifest himself through the miraculous, stories abounded of individuals who purportedly learned how to play the organ or piano without a single lesson. Given that saints were generally fascinated by the thought of being spiritual instruments of God, many took pride in the fact that they had no prior training to sing or to play. Certain elements of this preference for raw talent remain even today. Very often Pentecostal audiences are more impressed with the adept performer who has had no training than with one who displays a list of degrees. In the saints’ world where direct communication with God was a premium, excessive human conventions and rules always threatened to hinder one’s connection with the divine.

1. The Drum:

During the post-Emancipation period, saints quickly reclaimed the drum in order to praise a timeless God with energetic beats and exuberant polyrhythms. For traditional black Pentecostals a praise service without a steady powerful beat was like “food without seasoning”—edible but somewhat disappointing. Here their attachment to the drum distinguished them from mainline black denominations well into the latter part of the twentieth century. Many blacks of mainline denominations were slow to appreciate Pentecostal drumming, regarding the use of drums, along with that of the piano and guitar,

---

as "a sinful attempt to bring ragtime and blues into the church."

Over time, nonetheless, an increasing number of traditional gospel artists co-opted the black Pentecostal beats, tempi, and vamps despite the disapproval of their elders. Perhaps such performers finally realized what the saints had long known: spirited tempos provided manifold opportunities for enthusiastic audience involvement and even more enthusiastic performances. Kip Lornell noted that "despite the lack of direct musical interaction [between Pentecostal churches and quartets] within Memphis itself, holiness worship practices...clearly influenced gospel quartet practices after World War II." This was especially true of quartets in Memphis, where the Church of God In Christ—the largest black Pentecostal organization—is headquartered. Lornell added that "an inclination toward 'commercialism' by quartets seem[ed] to be partially a result of this trend. The physical movements on stage, dramatic posturing, and the dynamic vocal styles of the "soul killer" such as Silas Steele of the Spirit of Memphis would have been considered normal during a service of the Church of God in Christ in the 1940s." Baptist-born James Cleveland, once the "Crowned Prince of Gospel Music," also embellished his performances with Pentecostal tempos and tag phrases. In fact, the more "sanctified" quartets and Cleveland became, the more gospel music audiences—comprised largely of Baptist and Methodist—embraced compositions with "black Pentecostal" rhythmic and performance modalities. The drama that such renditions provided were not only hard to resist, but profitable.

2. The Hammond Organ

For the greater part of the century, the Hammond Organ B3 has been the preferred primary instrument of Pentecostal worshippers. When coupled with the piano, saxophone, tambourine, drum, and bass guitar a perfect black Pentecostal praise is certain

---

57 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 154.
to develop. Of recent, Pentecostal organists have begun to lament the fact that the full, rich sound quality of the Hammond B3 is being lost to innovations introduced by new Japanese manufacturers. Those who have functioning B3 originals are taking special care to preserve them.

D. Dance, Children, Dance!

When I think of his goodness
and what He's done for me
When I Think of His Goodness
And how he set me free
I can dance, dance, dance, dance
Dance, dance, dance all night!

As the above popular praise song suggests, individualism and divine inspiration were perhaps most artfully expressed as saints praised God through the "holy dance" or "shout." Descendants of transplanted African ancestors who as slaves were once forbidden to use ancestral drums, saints transformed their bodies into percussive instruments of praise. Hand clapping, head rocking, and shoulder movements arranged in complex polyrhythms often accompanied their shouts. The frequency with which saints shouted indicated their predilection for emotive, sincere worship.

Without doubt one of the most aesthetic descriptions of Pentecostals in praise was penned by James Baldwin some thirty years ago in Go Tell It on the Mountain. In the following passage, Baldwin accurately captures the way in which the shout often engulfs one worshipper at a time in an ever-expanding "wave of glory." John, yet "untouched" by the spirit, looks on as others are caught up in soul-stirring praise:

---

60 Center for Black Music Research.
61 Marvin Winans, Contemporary Gospel Singer and Pastor, terms hand clapping that is vigorous and broad "head-and-shoulder clapping," for the worshipper repeatedly leans his or her head and torso into each post-clap interval during the congregational performance of spirited Pentecostal praise songs.
While John watched, the Power struck someone, a man or woman; they cried out, a long, wordless crying, and arms outstretched like wings, they began the Shout. Someone moved a chair a little to give them room, the rhythm paused, the singing stopped, only the pounding feet and the clapping hands were heard; then another cry, another dancer; then the tambourines began again, and the voices rose again, and the music swept on again, like fire, or flood, or judgment. The church seemed to swell with the Power it held, and, like a planet rocking in space, the temple rocked with the Power of God....John watched, watched the faces, and the weightless bodies, and listened to the timeless cries. One day, so everyone said, this Power would possess him; he would sing and cry as they did now, and dance before his King. He watched young Ella Mae Washington, the seventeen-year-old granddaughter of Praying Mother Washington, as she began to dance. And then Elisha danced.63

That “[s]omeone moved a chair a little to give [the dancers] room” suggests that shouting was accommodated and acceptable. Unlike those who “got happy” in Baptist churches, Pentecostal dancers were never ushered out of the service or restrained by nurses in white or members who “are cautious of the contagious nature of shouting.”64 Quite to the contrary, dancing saints were literally escorted into the aisles or directly in front of the pulpit so that they could dance more freely. Affirming the enduring acceptability of shouting among black Pentecostals throughout the continent, Paul McIntyre observed in his study of Mount Zion Church (COGIC) in Windsor, Canada that “a finely wrought [offering table was] always removed before the ‘shout’ [began] for...most of the dancing tend[ed to] focus on the cleared area at the front.”65

Generally, as members and ushers form a protective circle around the dancers, onlookers encourage them with shouts such as “Go ‘head!,” “Praise Him!,” and “Let the Lord have His way!” Shouters do just that. After their non-verbal yet visibly expressive

praises and/or prayers have been thoroughly communicated to God, dancers often collapse to the floor in complete spiritual abandon or slowly descend from their experience with the divine. Dancing and foot-stomping on wooden floors assured that saints would be heard shouting from great distances away. Bishop H.M. Bolden, pastor The Rock of Salvation Holiness Church, Houston, admits that the sound of saints dancing in the spirit was so important that he and his congregation opted to surface the floor of their new sanctuary with hardwood as opposed to a linoleum or carpet. As the name of Bolden’s church suggests, he and his members as well as countless other black Pentecostals did not feel that they had “had church” until “the house” of God had literally been “rocked” with jubilant praise dancing. Understanding their audiences fervent appreciation for riding the rhythm in dance, musicians frequently rested their melodic accompaniments at measured yet unpredictable intervals to further enhance the contagious quality of the beat. The pianist, understanding intrinsically the marriage of percussion and string, became both drummer and string player, alternating roles while encouraging the rock. Few could resist the perfect balance of fresh yet familiar rhythms, meshed with fertile calls and acquiescent responses. Their God was worthy to be praised.

While those who were not acquainted with the Pentecostal tradition dismissed dancing as pure emotionalism, saints were certain that their dances served multiple purposes. Without lessons in choreography from Martha Graham, holy dancers believed firmly that they communicated with their dances: they made requests, motioned answers, and even conducted spiritual warfare. In fact, in many African American Pentecostal churches, one individual or another is believed to possess a special “anointing” or “calling” to dance before the Lord. Different from the average worshipper in praise whose movements constitute personal expressions of exultation and gratitude, those who are anointed to dance communicated spiritual messages of larger import and significance, e.g., victory over the enemy or a call to the entire congregation for rededication. The
unique styles that these dancers possess are usually appreciated by the entire congregation.\textsuperscript{66}

Black Pentecostal dancers generally fall into four categories. Category one dancers concentrate on footwork. As the dancers' feet move rhythmically to a rapid 2/4 staccato beat, the dancer's torso remains bowed while his/her hands rest on the lower thighs or knees. Category two dancers combine foot work with arm movements. In one popular position, the dancer's arms are bent at the elbow at a 60 degree angle. Hands are clenched into fists that remain a two to six inches apart. Here the arms are principally used for balance and focus. Category three dancers embellish foot and arm movements with trembling hands, shoulder movements, and complex polyrhythmic beats. Category four dancers further enhance foot, arm, shoulder, and hand movements with rhythmic yells, swaying, and head rocking. Many often add skips, short runs, or convulsive jerks\textsuperscript{67} to their choreo-praises, all of which indicate that category four dancers are the most agile of them all.

Yet not all saints can be categorized as dancers. While non-dancers often admire those who do, these worshippers concentrate their expressions of praise through verbal shouts, tears of joy, and general happy disposition throughout the praise service. Others sway quietly back and forth with uplifted hands and heads as they bask in the presence of God. Regardless of the manner of praise, saints are always encouraged by the praise conductor to make sure that they "get theirs," i.e., experience a personal emotive connection with the divine.

\textsuperscript{66} Personal dances were still very important. They helped saints to define not only themselves but others. The degree to which dances were unique to individuals was often supported by the fact that the children of the saints often entertained themselves at home by emulating a given church member's choreography and having their peers guess the name of the dancer copied.

\textsuperscript{67} Kossie, Conversation with Viki Duncan, September 6, 1997.
E. The Victory Lap:

Perhaps one of the most symbolic expressions of praise is what many saints call the "victory lap," an expressive run around the church that connotes triumph over a given situation. Saints often reserve victory laps for long-standing issues of significant spiritual or natural import, e.g., the salvation or divine healing of loved ones, the restoration of broken relationships, or relief from a devastating set of circumstances. The saints' victory lap is a condensed reinterpretation of the battle tactic that Joshua was divinely instructed to use in the battle of Jericho (Joshua 6: 1-16). Israeli soldiers were directed to march around the city of Jericho for seven days and to complete their march by "compass[ing] the city seven times" on the seventh day: "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city" (Joshua 6:16). Different from the children of Israel, after a one-, three-, or seven-lap run, AAIP-C saints shouted with both their voices and feet. Following such vivid demonstrations of triumph, saints usually declared genuine appreciation for the emotional release that dancing, running, and uninhibited praise produced by declaring at the end of the service, "Lawd, We had chu 'ch!"

While bountiful praise in whatever form is generally welcome among traditional African American Pentecostals and their direct descendants, African American Charismatics, especially children of the Word-Faith movement of the 1980s, tended to frown upon emotional abandon in worship.

F. The "Victory" or "Joy" Leap

In addition to the victory run, saints are sometimes encouraged to take a victory or joy leap. Doing so is particularly encouraged when members of the audience or an individual soliciting prayer shows signs of depression, disappointment, or weariness in general well-doing. Even saints who are less prone to dance without inhibition take

---

^68^The number three is believed to represent the trinity, and the number seven, completion.
advantage of opportunities to leap for joy. If nothing else, participants are all the more physically invigorated for their involvement.

G. The Devil Stomp

Like the victory leap, the “devil stomp” is usually enacted corporately upon direction from the praise service leader or presiding minister. Despite all that happens in Pentecostal churches, congregants would be somewhat surprised if an individual worshipper initiated a devil stomp without being directed to do so unless, of course, it was well known that the given individual’s choreopraise contained stomp-like beats.

The stomp is a creative rhythmic staging of the Genesis account in which Eve was told that the serpent would bruise her heel and she his head. When saints are experiencing difficulties in one area or another sometimes they are admonished to enact a symbolic crushing of the serpent’s head with their feet. The devil stomp is then followed by a victory leap, run, or dance to complete the deliverance process. The dual objective is to both fight the battle in question while praising God for the victory. A popular song of the 1980s mirrors this pervasive AAIP approach. “Don’t wait ‘til the battle is over, shout now!” the vocalist sings, “Bec ause you know in the end you’re going to win!”

H. Slain in the Spirit

The sight of people falling to the floor at the touch of a hand, a light gust of breath, or even without provocation, remains a fascinating episode for non-Pentecostals. While the term “slain” suggests the foreboding—and sometimes rightfully so— “falling out,” as many saints describe the occurrence, stems from what is perhaps best described in scientific terms as a sensorial overload, but in Pentecostal terms as one that occurs when humanity encounters the divine. Most people who have been slain in the spirit say that they either suddenly or gradually felt “light” and as if their legs, even their bodies, were no longer there. The body itself, like an unnecessary garment, falls away as
the spirit stands unsheathed in the awesome presence of Divinity. Very often those who fall out are not even aware that their orientation has changed; somehow the floor gently rose to meet them. During the encounter, some see angelic visions while others feel an ethereal peace flowing through hidden chambers of the heart, mind, and soul. When those who have fallen out regain consciousness, often a bit disoriented, they generally have to reacquaint themselves with the physical laws of the universe. Spiritually inebriated, or “drunk in the spirit” as saints describe it, some require the assistance of able-bodied ushers to return to their seats. In some instances cases, individuals report having felt “drunk” for hours or even days after the experience. In one remarkable account, Missionary Viola Miller was so overcome by her experience that the resulting disorientation precluded her driving for a week. Moreover, throughout the said span of time, she remained in a spiritually elevated state during which she professed that she was attended to, and even fed by, an angelic presence. Still others, particularly those new to the Pentecostal experience, sometimes rise from the floor perplexed, without having understood what happened to them, even to the degree of being disturbed or frightened by the process. Seasoned saints, familiar with the register of surprise and bewilderment, usually attempt to assuage the apparent fears and/or concerns of neophytes. Saints argue, nonetheless, that all are on the “operating table”; “God is working on them, cutting out stony hearts and putting in hearts of flesh,” “renewing minds,” “healing the emotion,” and if need be, “kicking the devil out.”

IV. Believe I’ll Testify

Saints of the pre-Civil Rights era believed that the testimony, an open profession of faith and/or confession, was as important as praise. Basing their belief on Revelation 12:11, saints told their testimonies to strengthen the faith of congregants.69 While every

---

69 KJV, Revelation 12:11: And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
testimony was different, all opened and closed with familiar phrases. They usually began hierarchically thus:

I give honor to God, to the pastor of the church, to associate ministers, to the mothers of the church, and to all of the saints of the Most High God.

Thereafter the theme of the testimony was introduced. Given the absence of amplifiers in earlier years, men, women, and children thanked the Lord in loud voices for healing, deliverance from one sin or another, salvation of loved ones, renewed employment opportunities, or peace of mind. While the individual testified, he or she was generally encouraged by affirmative “Amen’s,” “Bless Gods,” applause, and/or intermittent calls from members of the audience admonishing the testifier to “Tell it.” If a testimony happened to be particularly inspirational, the congregation often burst into spontaneous dancing and singing. Saints usually ended testimonies with the phrase “Pray my strength in the Lord that I might be the son (or daughter) that He’s calling for in these last and evil days.”

Testimonies possessed worth beyond their spiritual value, nonetheless. As with songs and dances, they provided a forum for congregants to become acquainted with one another in that congregants were free to share personal details of their lives with others. In some cases, testimonies took on the quality of sagas. The congregation was often given updates on situations in progress: a daughter’s court case, a grandmother’s bout with cancer, a son’s progress in school. In other instances, however, attendees new to the process often tended to reveal too much or testify too long. For this reason, this portion of the service was carefully monitored by the pastor and presided over by an experienced praise service leader. Like adept moderators, those who led testimony service made sure that all flowed smoothly. Accordingly, praise conductors needed to possess the verbal agility to reshape misspoken words, clarify references, or lighten tense
moods on a moment's notice. As best they could, praise service leaders insured that those saints who were in a particularly "carnal" mood did not use testimony time to even scores, reprimand, or embarrass other worshippers. Testifiers who veered off course were corrected by the pastor either openly and immediately or at the end of the service. Despite occasional hurt feelings, testimony service continued to be an engaging part of the ceremony.

Because of the potential for exaggerated disorder inherent in the open-ended structure of the praise and testimony service, especially for larger AAIP-C churches, and the constant risk of errant communication, many AAIP-C pastors of the latter twentieth century, responding to changes introduced by the New Charismatics, reduced the praise and testimony service to a praise service alone, one in which the congregation is led in song by a "praise team" of singers or a single "praise conductor," as did their early twentieth-century predecessors. On Sunday mornings, only testimonies that are particularly significant are permitted to be shared. To compensate for the loss of testimonial time, congregants are encouraged to attend weekly services, the intimacy of which usually allow for greater flexibility and more immediate pastoral direction or correction if needed.

III. Choir, Solo, Quartet

In most AAIP churches, the Praise and Testimony Service, a communal activity, is followed by a European-derived moment of "art for art's sake." Here musical renditions from the choir, a soloist, or an in-house "group" are presented. Yet the pre-established Pentecostal ambiance still requires that artists permit members to share in the creative experience. Having honed a religio-cultural appreciation for the conflict between knowable (human) structure and unknowable (divine) spirit—one which the spirit should always wins among them—saints are elated when the spirit "takes over" a song, defying the performers attempt to claim the piece as his/her own melodic expression. During
such instances the planned performance may be interrupted as the soloist or choir members, now enraptured in praise, shout or weep for joy.

Regardless of the spiritual impact, whatever the piece rendered or attempted is certain to have been borrowed from the repertoires of contemporary artists. Performers earned special distinction and applause when they were able to imitate the vocal quality, agility and the performance mode of whomever the gospel artist. Despite the appreciation for practice in this section of the service, Pentecostals often distinguish those who have the ability to sing from those who are “anointed” to sing. Performers graced with “an anointing” were particularly appreciated. For their performances rendered “under the anointing,” enraptured the audience, often transporting it to a level of praise and thanksgiving often beyond its own expectations. The spiritual elevation resulted not merely from the ability of the given performers, but from a soul-stirring inner assurance that the spirit of God had used the singer to bring conviction, healing, or divine rest.

While saints value solos and group performances, their predilection for communal worship has engendered in them a strong appreciation for choral arrangements that made extensive use of the call-response format. Similar to praise songs, these pieces invite audience vocal participation usually at the song’s end. During their performance, the choir and leader are expected to demonstrate vocal and rhythmic skills that collectively exceed those of audience members, otherwise the presentation would lack artistic justification. Once the choir, leader, and musicians have thoroughly distinguished themselves, they generally introduce an easily learned tag phrase so that members of the audience can take part in the overall production. Dr. Mattie Moss Clark’s “Going to Meet the King,” recorded in 1953, uses the aforementioned form. Both leader and choir are constantly engaged in the song, trading positions in the second verse. The audience is

---

70 Without necessarily having oil placed on them as a sign of sanctification or consecration, those who were anointed to sing seemed to be graced with a special sanctioning that exceeds mere talent and ability.
finally invited to participate as the leader and choir sing “Get right, Get back!” Clark’s piece continues to be a favorite among black Pentecostals because it respects the black Pentecostal musical tradition in content and form. The song creatively combines themes that are central to the universal Pentecostal experience: the ultimate journey to heaven; belief in the Trinity; and the call to repentance:

Leader: Oh, I’m Gonna Walk.
Choir: I’m gonna walk.
Leader: And I’m gonna talk.
Leader: I’m gonna talk.
Leader: I’m gonna sing.
Choir: I’m gonna sing.
Leader: For the Heavenly King
Choir: For the Heavenly King
Leader: When they march around the throne
Choir: I want to be there
Choir: When the general roll is called
Leader: They tell me that the half
Choir: Has never been told
Leader: Oh, but the Holy Ghost
Choir: Took control

Choir: Walk!
Leader: For the Father
Choir: Talk!
Leader: For the Son
Choir: Sing
Leader: For the Holy Ghost
Choir: Three in one.
Leader: I’m on my way to heaven and going to meet the King

Choir: Just listen
Leader: Listen and let me tell you
Choir: Just listen
Leader: Listen and let me tell you.

Leader: You’d better get right.
Choir: Get right.
Leader: Get back.
Choir: Get right.
Leader: I’m on my way to heaven
Choir: I’m on my way to heaven
Leader: And I’m going to meet the...
Choir: King!
Although few outside the greater black Church were acquainted with Clark, her contribution to choral gospel music form cannot be overstated. When COGIC saints convened yearly for their national convocation, choir directors and musicians from throughout the COGIC polity received additional instruction in general musicianship from Dr. Clark and those who worked with her. As COGIC worshippers blanketed America, reflecting the migratory treks of African Americans throughout the continent, so did Clark's influence. The breadth and scope of her contribution to gospel music has yet to be fully examined. That internationally known gospel performers such as The Clark Sisters (Dr. Clark's daughters), Andraé Crouch, the Hawkins Family, the Winans, Commissioned are of COGIC descent bespeaks the valuation of choral music that Mattie Moss Clark nurtured in COGIC's musically inclined.

Quartet music, generally favored among black Baptists and Methodists, was often rejected by Pentecostals not only because such groups relied heavily on traditional hymns, many of which saints renounced as devoid of "victory," but also because stories of spiritual infidelity among myriad quartets were in constant circulation. According to saints, too many performers sang without conviction. Members continued to "curse," "run women," and "puff on cigarettes" while "singing about Jesus." Sin and the Savior were not compatible according to the saints' perfectionist code of morality; fountain could not "send forth" both sweet and bitter water. Gospel artists, like all other Christians, were to be known "by their fruits," (Matthew 7:16) not by gifts or callings, both of which were "without repentance," (Romans 11:29), i.e., operative even if a given individual did not live a committed Christian life.

---

72 As early as his teenage years, Harold Eugene Smith (1935- ) acted as an associate director to Mattie Moss Clark. "In August 1963, he organized the Majestics, a 50 voice choir. He was a founder and members of the Gospel Music Workshop of America with James Cleveland in 1968. He is best known for his flamboyant direction of the choir, and his recording (Lord, Help Me Hold Out) in 1973 has become a gospel standard." (DuPree, 256).
Even though saints often rejected quartet music for spiritual reasons, a growing number of quartets ironically owed a great deal of their appeal to an employ of Pentecostal drama and technique. Their fruitful usage of Pentecostal modalities helped to catalyze the secularization of gospel music, a development that many saints lamented for decades to come. To imagine a marriage of the secular and the sacred hinted at sacrilege to many saints. For history and the scripture had taught them that whenever money was the sole objective, corruption and abuse were not far behind, especially given that a dissonant triad of “God, greed, and guns” had cost blacks in the New World centuries of pain, brutality, and exploitation.

As the saints call for “holiness” had little influence over the music industry’s more attractive call for “money,” their disposition did not keep many quartet groups from experiencing tremendous financial success. American capitalism was a force that few could reckon with. Quartet success was largely related to the fact that Americans, religious or not, simply liked gospel music. A certain sense of nostalgia mixed with childhood memories of church dinners and picnics permeated southern life, black or white, migratory or stationary. Among blacks of the 1940s and 1950s, southern gospel recordings often proved to be more profitable than secular ones, a detail which underscores that blacks throughout the country—most of whom possessed southern roots—shared an appreciation for sacred musical texts regardless of their denominational affiliation or location.Formerly confined to the south during the aforementioned period, quartet music enjoyed unprecedented national appeal.

More than willing to give black audiences what they wanted, record companies and producers cashed in on the developments. For example, Don Robey’s Peacock

---

73 As late as 1993 *Ebony Magazine* African-American respondents voted gospel music as the preferred musical medium.
Record Company, a secular music entity, was among them. Located in Houston’s historic Fifth Ward at 4104 Lyons Avenue, Peacock experienced its greatest early success with the gospel recording “Our Father” by the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi.\(^75\) Capitalizing on his successful undertaking, producer Robey, an alleged gambler,\(^76\) released a series of gospel recordings on the Peacock label featuring a series of singing groups including the Mighty Clouds of Joy, the Gospelaires of Dayton, Ohio, the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Sensational Nightingales, the Joy Bells, and Reverend Cleophys Robinson.\(^77\)

When confronted with seeking out a secular label for recordings, Pentecostals battle an ontological question that the historical experience of African Americans made difficult to answer: “How can we sing the Lord’s songs in a strange land?” (Psalm 137: 4), e.g., how can a gospel singer “get in the spirit” in the sound booths of a record company whose owner “ain’t nowhere close to being saved?” Accordingly, in the 1940s and 1950s, saints general interpretation of how sought out the why’s of the matter: For what “Godly” reason would a spiritual singer work with a secular record company? The question suggested the insurmountable; the spiritual and secular could never “touch and agree.” Nonetheless, the sheer nonexistence of black Christian-owned record companies forced musicians intent on developing their gifts to reinterpret how as manner, method, or procedure. Those who were able to envision working with secular companies simply took their chances despite the heated barrage of criticism sure to contest their decision. Those who could not fathom the idea of “collaborating with the world,” contented themselves to “let[ting] the Lord use them” in their home churches.

Beyond the artistic value of the performance itself, saints’ chief desire was that it be “anointed.” Anointed singing accomplished not only prepared the hearts of

\(^75\) Alan Govenar, The Early Years of Rhythm & Blues: Focus on Houston (Houston, TX: Rice University Press, 1990) 6.
\(^76\) Ibid., 7.
\(^77\) Ibid.
congregants to “receive the Word of God,” but taught saints to walk by faith. Pastors and speakers sometimes acknowledge the benefit of anointed singing when it appears that “the air has already been cleared”—i.e. negative spiritual forces have been dispelled—by the time they approach the pulpit to deliver the sermon.

The faith lesson that saints learn is that “good singing” is not always “anointed singing.” The openness to a fresh move makes them flexible and more adaptable to change than those who revere strict tradition. Anointed singing brought what the saints called “deliverance”—long-standing life changes, not short-lived “spiritual highs.” Yet perceiving the anointing is not as subjective a task as it may seem. The internal vote of approval that congregants experience almost in unison and often in spite of themselves suggests that a given performer is anointed. Saints believe, however, that only those who have yielded to God, i.e., have a consistent walk with him, really know when the spirit is moving or sanctioning a given rendition.

Anointed singing is more easily achievable when the song performed itself is “anointed” and strength-building. Careful to make sure that the songs nourish the soul, Pentecostal choir directors and praise leaders still reject traditional songs and spirituals that have “no victory” in them,” i.e., contain themes that are excessively melancholic, defeatist, or tolerant of human weakness. This meant that most quartet music, predominantly comprised of traditional songs or spirituals, and even Thomas Dorsey’s “Precious Lord,” would be cut from many Pentecostal repertoires. To admit being simultaneously “tired,” “weak,” and “worn,” is more negative confession than saints could bare. Black Pentecostals would rather replace Dorsey’s famous song with another of their favorite tunes: “I’ve been runnin’ for Jesus a mighty long time, and I’m not tired yet!” Even if saints were experiencing difficulties, the Pentecostal approach to hardness

---

78 Kip Lornell, “Happy in the Service of the Lord”, 47.
is to emulate New Testament figures Paul and Silas who "praised God in the midnight hour" despite their imprisonment. This portion of the service, occurring between the praise and testimony service and the message, is important, then, because both the song selected and its eventual performance may suggest much about the singer's level of spiritual dedication.

Moreover, the performance provides an opportunity for the performer(s) to receive an immediate evaluation from the congregation. Those who sing in Pentecostal churches become quite adept at knowing when applause represents resigned relief from a poor rendition, polite accommodation for a sincere try, or genuine appreciation for the truly outstanding—the latter being the preferred response. Members of the audience sit on the edges of their seats when a singer or group attempts to perform a piece by a particularly gifted gospel artist. Listeners are sorely disappointed if an overly ambitious amateur gives a crude or unrecognizable interpretation of a given song (i.e., "messed it up"). Likewise, when the performer renders an artful, spirited interpretation thereof (i.e., "tore it up"), celebration and adulation are, in perfect order, ensued with the same degree of verve and enthusiasm. Moreover, if listeners simply clap for "the performer" alone, his/her job has not been sufficiently done. If, on the other hand, participants are visibly enraptured in fervent praise "to God" at the close of the rendition, the performer's mission has been accomplished. At times when the unspoken desire for an encore is communicated by the audience's collective "reaching out for more," an even more glorious time in the Lord unfolds—saints then enter "the high praise of God" and initiate the shout.

**Preach, Preachah!**

In most Pentecostal-Holiness churches, the minister delivers his sermon after the choir or appointed soloist sing. His delivery promises to be just as passionate as the people who make up his congregation. They know him and hate them, yet Sunday after
Sunday, year after year, each party prepares itself for a fresh reacquaintance with the other and the divine. Perhaps both keep returning for more because they are sure to encounter an unpredictable yet predictable combination of eight basic message scenarios: (1) the planned/inspired; (2) planned/uninspired (3) unplanned/inspired; (4) unplanned/uninspired; (5) redirected/inspired; (6) redirected/uninspired; (7) unexpected inspired; (8) the unexpected/uninspired. Each of these message schemas will then be met with two Pentecostal audience types: (1) responsive and (2) non-responsive. Consider the following four inspired message scenarios:

**Scenario 1:**

**Preacher:** Father God, I pray that you bless this message that we are about to receive. I say no to self and yes to your divine purpose. Have your way, Lord. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O, God.

**Congregation:** Amen. (Deep and rich).

**Preacher:** You may be seated if you can. 79 When I went before my Father in the cool of the evening, I ask him, “Lord, what would you have me say to your people?” The Lord, being God, did not answer me immediately. I went before him again and said, Lord, you ask me to feed your sheep, and I entreat you to know to what it is you would have me say. A third time I challenged the Lord with His word saying, “How can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach except they be sent.” Lord, I know you sent me. I entreat you again Father, what would you have me say. In the wee hours of the morning, I hear a still small voice whisper in my ear a single word, powerful and profound: “Stand!”

**Congregation:** Alright...Well...Let the Lord use you!

---

79 The added condition “if you can” is important to note. Pentecostal pastors often add this phrase because one person or another in the congregation may still be spiritually enraptured upon his introduction in which case sitting down may not be immediately possible. Sometimes, if the person’s praise carries a special anointing or is particularly heart-warming (e.g. a backslider has been reclaimed or a convert won) members of the congregation may support him or her in praise. The musician often attempts to help such individuals make a smooth transition into a quieter mode by playing chord progressions that suggest peace and tranquillity. The “Yes” chant, composed by Bishop Mason of the Church of God in Christ, works well in such cases.
Scenario 2:

Preacher: Father God, I pray that you bless this message that we are about to receive. I say no self and yes to your divine purpose. Have your way, Lord. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O, God.

Congregation: Amen.

Preacher: I don’t claim to be some great wonder or to have come with some deep revelation. I’m just a country boy who said, “Here I am, Lord. Send me.” I believe I hear the Lord saying, “Wait, On the Lord!”

Congregation: Alright

Preacher: Yes, wait on him...

Scenario 3:

Preacher: Father God, I pray that you bless this message that we are about to receive. I say no self and yes to your divine purpose. Have your way, Lord. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O, God.

Congregation: Amen.

Preacher: You may be seated if you can. You know I had a message when I walked through that door. Here are the notes, organized and easy to be consulted. But I feel the Lord leading me in different direction. Mmmmm. Yes, Lord. I hear you...

Congregation: Let the Lord use you...

Preacher: Y’all ain’t gon’ like me after this message. Mmmmmm. Lord...these are hard sayings.

Congregation: Go ‘head, go ‘head. Let the Lord use you...

Preacher: Saints, I hear the Lord saying, “It’s holiness or hell” Everybody say “holiness”

Congregation: Holiness

Preacher: or hell!

Congregation: or hell...
Scenario 4:

Preacher: Father God, I pray that you bless this message that we are about to receive. I say no self and yes to your divine purpose. Have your way, Lord. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O, God.

Congregation: Amen. (Deep and rich).

Preacher: You may be seated if you can. I didn’t know that I was going to speak this evening, yet I realize that the scripture says, “Be ye also ready.” I pray, therefore, that my words be as the pen of a ready writer so that the Lord may be glorified me.

Congregation: That’s alright. Let the Lord use you. Bless him, Lord.

Preacher: Turn with me if you will to the book of Job...

While each of the noted scenarios has always been prevalent in Pentecostal churches, the unplanned/inspired message was the predominant format employed in early-twentieth-century Pentecostal churches. Because of the general distrust among Pentecostals of ritual and rigid order, both of which they believed stifled the moving of the spirit, many hesitated to plan sermons before they were to be delivered. Hoping to get a fresh, spontaneous word from the Lord, few bothered to use a script and thereby grew to favor extemporaneous preaching. What happened in some cases, however, was that congregants often ended up being sources of ecclesiastical inspiration as they walked through the door. In particularly legalistic bodies, for example, the woman who entered wearing a dress above the knee or the man who wore a short-sleeved shirt found themselves suddenly transformed into the message of the hour. One minister admits having lost an otherwise faithful member to this method. Believing at the time that anything “false” constituted a subtle form of lying, he preached against wig-wearing until a well meaning sister left the church. When no one of equal dedication joined the congregation for some time to come, he, of course, learned his lesson.

Pentecostal ministers of the early twentieth century who did attempt to use notes did not escape being challenged. They were often accused of leaning on a crutch, or
worse—given the memory of segregated times—of worshipping like "white folks." Allegations of a southern black preacher and congregation distancing themselves from Negro culture were difficult to shake, if not impossible. Words carried tremendous import in the greater black community—one heavily steeped in the oral tradition. With time, nonetheless, most express a greater appreciation for the planned/inspired message, although many continue to bear with those still finding their way.

The call response method of delivery predominated in most of these churches. No one felt that the preacher had preached unless the audience had been elevated to a spiritual high with Hammond B3 accompaniment and fervent tambourine polyrhythms. Drums, tambourines, washboards, castanets, electric guitars, upright pianos, Hammond organs, and latter electronic instruments all helped to usher the pastor and congregation into a perfect praise. While AAIP-Cs of the later twentieth century developed a greater appreciation for variety than their predecessors, the AAIP-Cs traditional homilitic climax along with its postpartum praise or dance session continues to be a standing feature in AAIP-C worship services throughout the country.

**Pentecostal Audiences:**

Pentecostal preachers would argue that audiences are either (1) non-receptive or (2) receptive. The reasons for either disposition are many. Spiritual complacency is blamed for a given audience's non-receptive mood. Audiences filled with the "sanctified and satisfied" sometimes need profound heavenly visitations before showing signs of appreciation for the message. Praise leaders and ministers employ several tactics to "pump" audiences "up": (1) sing spirited praise songs given their belief that God inhabits the praises of his people; (2) usher the audience into spontaneous praise and worship both of which help to expel negative spiritual forces; (3) have members of the audience greet others with a "holy" kiss, hug, or handshake; (4) tell a humorous story; (5) provide ample opportunities for the audience to participate in the message via planned
recitations and/or movements; and (6) foster moment for members of the audience to reflect on the goodness of God in their lives.

The non-receptive disposition of a given Pentecostal audience may also stem from a judgmental disposition. If according to hearsay a speaker or praise leader has not been living “a victorious life,” i.e., has fallen from grace and continues to resume whatever his/her congregational duty, audiences may protest with blank stares, folded arms, crossed legs, and sealed lips. Unlike reverential silence, which is often punctuated with quiet weeping and gentle praises, the silence affiliated with judgment cuts to the core and constitutes a formidable barrier to the person attempting to get “an Amen.”

Receptive audiences, on the other hand, are a Pentecostal preacher’s greatest joy. (S)he does not feel comfortable with a quiet audience. “Y’all ain’t going to sleep on me, are you?” many inquire without hesitation. “No, we’re just listening,” someone may interject from the audience. The speaker breathes a sign of relief because (s)he realizes that Pentecostal audiences are historically accustomed to messages that contain intervals of “whooping” or “tuning up.” So expected are such moments that a minister who knows ahead of time that (s)he will forfeit the call-response mode (e.g., will “teach” as opposed to “preach”) is careful to inform the audience of his/her homiletic style at the outset: “Don’t expect me to tune it up tonight. Sometimes it’s just good to listen attentively to the word.” With this important cultural base covered mind, (s)he proceeds to “rightly divide the word of truth.”

**Prayer Line: Reach Out and Touch the Lord**

After the minister closes his sermon, sinners are invited to “give their hearts to the Lord”; and those who needed reclaiming were also encouraged to come to the altar. Although this is strictly a voluntary act, in years past church mothers or seasoned saints would simply go through the audience and gather those whom they felt the spirit was calling.
During the prayer line, the more gifts in operation, the greater the possibility that the needs of those seeking prayer will be met. Those who appreciated the special attention to their needs generally welcomed the intimate attention they receive. With Freudian and Jungian psychology in their embryonic phases of universal exceptance, ministers, church mothers, and seasoned saints found themselves counseling many a new convert on issues related to their personal lives, bosses, employment, children, and neighbors.

**Offerings: Give It in Jesus’s Name**

As with any congregation, finances are needed for expenditures. Early twentieth-century congregations were usually poor; thus, many pastors used personal finances to support the ministry. While black Baptist and Methodists enjoyed longtime prominence in both the black and white communities, black Pentecostal pastors of the pre-civil rights era found themselves at a distinct disadvantage. Banks were reluctant to lend them money; therefore, many congregations sold barbecue and chicken dinners, sponsored musicals and bake sales, and encouraged gleaning\(^\text{80}\) to prepare the church budget for building fund projects. Similar to the case of black businessmen in Texas, black pastors’ spiritual missions were hindered by their own as well as their members’ general lack of capital, experience, and training.\(^\text{81}\) Despite their such hardships, black Pentecostal ministers, along with their Baptist and Methodist contemporaries, still secure more money and volunteer time from their African Americans parishioners than any other organization by black people.\(^\text{82}\)

The benefits of educational opportunities afforded the children of first-generation AAIPs are reflected not only through increased tithes and offerings, but also through more sophisticated income-generating church programs and associations. From recording

---

\(^\text{80}\) Donations would solicited and placed in cards containing a designated number of slots for quarters, dimes, and nickels. Gleaning eventually faded in popularity as a means for raising funds.

\(^\text{81}\) Sapper, 205.

church choirs, to cassette- and videotape series, to an infinite variety of printed materials and community services, the AAIPC church service, along with its energetic components reinterpreted and revised, has constituted a springboard for unprecedented affluence and experiential abundance.
Volume II

The Move Is On:
African American Pentecostal-Charismatics in the Southwest

by

Karen Lynell Kossie
Chapter 6: New Migrations: The Making of a Pentecostal Couple

In the 1950s, a growing number of Pentecostal ministers in the Southwest duplicated the stories of physical and spiritual migration found in the histories of Leola Crawford, H.W. Falls, and Arthur Bonds. Houston was particularly attractive, for by 1950 it was the largest metropolitan area in the South.\(^1\) The city’s growth mirrored a dramatic population shift that had begun to change the character of the South. Numan Bartley noted in his study *The New South 1945-1980* (1995) that in the 1950s approximately 5.5 million farm people left the land with 1.5 million whites and nearly 2 million blacks migrating out of the South. The young men and women who left the farms often headed for Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, or Newark to secure better employment and educational opportunities.

During the 1940s an estimated 75 percent of the farm youngsters reaching maturity left agriculture, and the trend continued during the years that followed. Bartley also contends that the migrants, generally more skilled and better educated than their neighborhood peers, were more apt to be male than female. Although black farmers headed the exodus from the farm to the city, those who had grown weary of the double burden of poverty and institutionalized racism left the South altogether. Yet many black southerners continued to migrate into urban southern spaces like Houston because economic opportunities abounded there.

In 1952, Samuel Lubell noted that the South’s emergent industrial economy had begun to displace the region’s “agrarian-rooted racial attitudes.”\(^2\) Even while economic power in cities continued to be wielded by whites, whom the South’s color caste system gave a decisive advantage, blacks in southern cities made socio-political and economic strides alongside their white contemporaries. Yet the swelling momentum of the civil

---


\(^2\) Cited in Bartley, 139.
rights movement among African Americans in the South suggested that many black Southerners determined to break free of the social shackles limiting the full expression of their creative ability and power.

Among black southwesterners stories of physical and spiritual migrations abound. The accounts of some of my ancestors provide entry into both types. While the experiences of my paternal great-grandparents (George and Delia Tyres of Wharton County, Texas) and of my maternal grandmother (Simmie Whitmore of Opelousas, Louisiana) offer a profile black southerners who migrated into the Southwest, my parents experiences mirror at least one kind of spiritual migration from traditional religious practices to African American Independent Pentecostal (AAIP) Christianity. Carole Boyce Davies's post-modern theory of migratory subjectivity, which defines the subject away from marginality\(^3\) and allows the subject to construct it own center, permits my arguing that my ancestors's cultural and physical movements were legitimate expressions of the twentieth-century African-American quest for freedom, individuality, and valuation in both secular and spiritual contexts.

**Physical Migrations:**

George Tyres moved to Houston at the turn of the century, settling in Ryan's Addition\(^4\) with his wife and three children: Hughie, Willie Mae, and Millie Ann (February 2, 1911-December 30, 1997).\(^5\) Hughie, a sailor, married Madame Michelle, a foretune teller whose customers paid with refrigerators (the Madame's collatoral of choice) when cash was scarce.\(^6\) Willie Mae never married. Millie, the youngest, wedded Major DeWalt for whom she bore a son, Otis. When she and DeWalt separated, Millie Ann married Roy Lee Kossie, Sr., a cowboy who had migrated to Houston from Brenham, Texas, the home of the Kossie and Randall clans. Kossie joined Millie Ann

---


\(^2\) History of Ryan's Addition to be articulated.


\(^6\) Madame Michelle had Hughie buried at sea since, according to her, he loved the water.
who continued to reside on her father’s land, located in a prime area for city developers. There she and her husband raised their family including Otis (from Millie Ann’s previous marriage); Tommie Lee; Roy Lee, Jr.; George Richard; John Elmus; and Wilma Jean. Like many blacks in the South, Millie Ann and Roy, Sr. had to fight to hold onto family property, losing much of it to shrewd members of a prominent white family who managed to get an illiterate elderly aunt to “X-away” a large track of valuable land, one that extended from present-day Highway 59, east of the Kossie parcel, to the Hardy Toll Road, North of the same. When an unnamed white woman began to plant lilies along what was left of the property in order to make legal claims that she had made improvements on the land, Millie Ann—fed up with the behavior of her land-hungry aggressors—sent her children on their first civil rights mission to uproot every lily in bloom.

Increased white presence in the area suggested that city planners had Ryan’s Addition on their minds. The eventual annexation of the region in 1948 along with that of other predominantly black and white enclaves revealed that planners were determined to transform the sprawling bayou town into a city. This meant that even while the Kossie children were every bit raised in the country, the city of Houston came to meet them, ready or not. The enhanced industrialization of the area indicated that this rural family did not have to leave the country in order to experience the advantages and disadvantages of city life. Indeed, the Kossie children could catch mudbugs (crawfish) for lunch, shoot squirrels for dinner, and ride the city bus downtown on any given day.

Although the negative effects of modernization mounted as many blacks families were forced to relocate for the construction of highway systems and schools, blacks in Ryan’s Addition appreciated the improvements that came with annexation, including indoor plumbing, paved roads, and new schools.\(^7\) Between 1935 and 1950, Houston constructed new schools to accommodate its growing black population including Jack

\(^7\) Air conditioning was ensconced in the future. For the while, residents of Ryan’s Addition left screened windows and doors open to let in cool, fresh breezes.
Yates and Phyllis Wheatley High Schools, both cauldron’s of excitement and creativity. Young Levi Perry (who became a well respected doctor)\(^8\) and Barbara Jordan (future congressman) were among the students attending them.

What black Houstonians did not appreciate, however, was the vigilante-style police practices of far too many officers in the Houston Police Department (HPD). As was the case in most cities throughout the South, fear and intimidation were the order of the day. Yet this unpleasant reality would change with time.

Simmie Washington, who lived a few hundred miles away in Opelousas, Louisiana, was obviously impressed with the improvements she had heard about through a cousin residing in Houston. A single parent, Simmie Washington aimed to provide a comfortable existence for herself and her only child, Barbara Lessie. Raised in the company of loving aunts, uncles, and surrogate mothers, Barbara spent the first twelve years of her life in Opelousas, Louisiana. Having lived in the birthplace of the Zydeco\(^9\) just long enough to have her conversation flavored with a detectable Louisiana “French” (Creole) accent, she boarded the train for Houston, Texas, to join her mother who had gone ahead to find work and a place to stay.\(^10\)

Despite her expectations, life in Houston for Simmie was not immediately better. Even though she had finished St. Landry’s Parish training school, obtained twelve college hours at Southern University, taught, and even served as the administrator in a rural school, she apparently lacked the necessary credentials to teach in the Texas Public School System. To make ends meet, then, she took a job at a pie shop in town. This forced career move must have been a disappointment for Simmie. For not only was she deprived of the social prestige that teaching afforded African American women in her day, but she found herself alienated from a community that she appreciated:

\(^8\) Perhaps a sign of Perry’s affluence, all of his children attended the prestigious St. John’s School, located on Claremont Lane in Houston’s posh River Oaks community.

\(^9\) “Zydeco” is high-spirited “Cajun” music. Its name if derived from the French term “Des Haricots” (the green beans). Purportedly the light-hearted rhythm of the music was inspired by the sound of freshly shelled beans as they fell into tins pots.

Mrs. Williams [a professional colleague and friend] and my mother were good friends. She called Moma "Sal," although I never knew why! She and my mother both had big purses like only teachers carry, full of stuff. Her house was chocked full of books from the front room to the kitchen, like a library. I loved going there.... Moma would cook as they talked "teacher talk." As I recall, Mrs. Williams always won whatever the argument.  

What instructional gifts Simmie could not share with Texas students, she passed on to her daughter. Even before Simmie came to Texas, she entertained "Ba'bie with her animated storytelling abilities:

Mother would iron my clothes and tell me stories as I lay in bed watching her press the many wrinkles out of my favorite school dresses. I loved the stories of Little Red Riding Hood and Little Black Sambo. She would tell them with such expression. The warm sound of her voice made me feel just as starched and pretty as the outfits that she made look fresh and new.  

Simmie also taught "Ba'bie" how to read, embroider, and most importantly, how to cook. As most Texans of her generation expected an authentic "Lou'sanna" woman to know how to do.

Simmie and her daughter lived with Mrs. Miles, a cousin residing in Fifth Ward on Gillespie Street. After staying there for approximately one year, Simmie and her seventh-grader rented a room from Mrs. Bryant who owned a place near town on Nance street. A year later, Simmie moved to an apartment complex in Ryan's Edition where she and Barbara lived for two years. In addition to facing the difficulties inherent in relocation and change of employment, Simmie was thrown into an enduring physical battle with rheumatoid arthritis. The progressive onset of the disease meant that by her late thirties, she hobbled about on a crutch; by her mid-forties, she was forced to use a walker; by her mid-fifties, Simmie was confined to a wheelchair. Still she remained a

11 Ibid., 31.
12 Ibid., 8.
vivacious woman, entertaining friends at home and on the telephone, and educating her grandchildren as they sat at her bedside, the site of her private "home-school."

Upon her and Barbara's arrival to Houston, neither of the Louisiana belles remained single for long. Within two years of their coming, both had met industrious, responsible young men whom they eventually wedded. Simmie made the acquaintance of Everett Whitmore of Little Rock, Arkansas, who worked with Sheffield Steel Company. Displaced by the construction of Ryan Elementary school, the two bought a house in 1950 Ryan's Addition not far from the Kossie parcel. At age thirteen, Barbara met Roy, who by age fifteen was already a skilled butcher gainfully employed Atkin's Grocery Store. When still in his teens, he had purchased his mother's first washer and dryer and clothes for his younger siblings, thereby earning a lifelong reputation for being a good son and big brother. Roy was such a generous, responsible son that his mother, having grown to depend on his moral and financial support, was quite reluctant to release him to his young bride.

With the eventual approval of Millie Ann, Roy's mother, at ages nineteen and seventeen, Roy and Barbara married. And as was often the case with many young black couples in those days, the two began to build a life together with help of relatives on both sides of the family. The newlyweds resided with Roy's maternal aunt, Willie Mae, for a year and with Barbara's mother the following year as Roy worked to purchase their first house. Once the original two-room structure had been firmly secured on a lot owned by Roy's family, he and Barbara added rooms to accommodate the large family that Roy looked forward to having; ten was his number of choice. By 1966, Roy had nine children; his elder brother Otis Dewalt, ten; his elder sister Tommie Lee (Kossie) Jackson, three; his younger brother George Richard Kossie, five; and his youngest brother John Elmus Kossie, two; and Wilma Jean Kossie, still an unwed teenager, had none. By the close of the sixties, Millie Ann could claim four daughter's-in-law, one son-in-law, and twenty-nine grandchildren. With Ryan's Addition teaming with Dewalts, Kossies, and
Jacksons\textsuperscript{13} and little room left for expansion, each of the sons moved to newer middle-class subdivision in Northeast Houston in the mid-sixties. Only Tommie Lee remained near the original family threshing ground in Ryans Addition. After permitting Otis to use some of the family property to launch his concrete business,\textsuperscript{14} Millie Ann moved next door to Tommie Lee where she resided until she succumbed to a bout with pneumonia at age 86 on December 30, 1997.

**Spiritual Migrations:**

While Roy’s and Barbara’s parents initiated a physical migration into Houston from East and West Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, Roy’s paternal grandmother, Mother (Randall) Kizzee made room for a spiritual migration. A native of Navasota, Texas, Kizzee embraced the COGIC movement early in life, acting as a missionary for a number of years. Mirroring the tradition of the early pioneers, Mother Kizzie was one of the many invisible women who “worked out” COGIC churches throughout the South and Midwest in the 1930s and ‘40s. Kizzee focused her efforts on Houston’s Trinity Gardens community in northeast Houston. A colorful character, Kizzee dressed in white most of the time, as many COGIC church women did in her day. Roy Kossie, Jr., her grandson, remembers Kizzee’s being particularly fond of “Granny boots” or at least the pair he bought her one memorable Christmas. Kizzee was so impressed with “Fuzzy’s” gift that she made him a huge, sturdy poundcake. True to the grandmother-grandson social rites of the day, Kizzee saw to it that her grandson consume the cake in totality before he left her house. Although Kossie might have eaten with a smile, he says “[he] couldn’t stand to look at a pound cake for years after that.” Yet he admits having gotten

\textsuperscript{13} The names and birthdates of Roy Barbara Kossie’s children are as follows: Larry Norvell, January 2, 1952 (Herman Hospital); Viki Diane, August 20, 1953 (Herman Hospital); Isaiah Jerome, August 26, 1955 (Herman Hospital); Simmie Louise, January 10, 1957 (St. Elizabeth’s Hospital); Shere Lyn and Sherman Earl, September 1958 (Lockwood Hospital); Gerald Wayne, October 12, 1960; Karen Lynell, August 17, 1963; Kimberly Rose, February 2, 1966.

\textsuperscript{14} Located on the corner of Evelyn and Elysian, DeWalt’s business is still thriving. Carl Dewalt, his youngest son by his first marriage, has launched a similar operation in the 1960 area.
quite a few good laughs at Kizzee's speaking in tongues. "I'd double over laughing," he recalled.

Having already committed her family to prayer, Kizzee continued to pursue her spiritual calling as a missionary and COGIC Mother.\(^{15}\) In the 1940s, she along with Mother Mack, Mother Coleman, Sister Butler and other church members purchased land for a church on Shotwell Street in Trinity Gardens and "just went to work and had the church built," as Head Mother of the Latter Day Revival Church (1966-1997), Josephine Sanders (1912- July 1997), recalled. The lot upon which the original church was built now holds Word of Life Faith Temple where Lura Guillory has pastored for more than 30 years.

Even though Kossie remembered Mother Kizzee's dedication to Pentecostalism, at the time he did not make an immediate connection between her COGIC affiliation and his appreciation for the Latter Rain Movement. Kizzee died before Kossie had the opportunity to discuss similarities and differences, nor would the climate of the times have encouraged him to do so. For most COGIC adherents dismissed the movement as heretical and even refused to fellowship with non-COGIC black Pentecostals, although they maintained an historical relationship with black Baptists.\(^{16}\) Yet time and historical evidence confirm that Roy's and Barbara's spiritual migration was indeed a variation on the same Pentecostal theme that Mother Kizzee and other blacks in the Southwest had engaged years earlier.

In spite of the studies of the period like that of Ruby Funchess Johnson that denounced non-traditional movements like the Latter Rain movement,\(^{17}\) the young couple opted out of tradition, not because they lacked economic or educational initiative or were

\(^{15}\) The term "Mother," coined in the COGIC tradition, was used to refer to dedicated women in the church who acted as an advisor and assistant to the pastor of the church. The title "Sister" was used to refer to any Christian woman who attended services regularly and lived a morally upstanding life.

\(^{16}\) Although Bishop Charles Mason was dismissed from the original Church of God in Christ, which was Baptist in origin, he continued to encourage an amicable relationship between his newly organized COGIC (1907) and the Baptist church.

enemies to modernity, but rather because they wanted a deeper religious experience than the Methodist teachings of their immediate families would allow them to enjoy at the time. Roy’s family was African Methodist Episcopal and Barbara’s, Methodist Episcopal, both of which were slow to appreciate the kind of enthusiastic, charismatic Christianity that the Latter Rain movement welcomed.

While in the latter twentieth century Pentecostal worship modalities encouraged among an increasing number of “Bapticost” and “Methocostal” churches, the brand of religion that Roy and Barbara embraced was berated not only by scholars and members of the black religious establish establishment, but also by many traditional black Christians as well. Yet neither Barbara nor Roy entered Pentecostalism devoid of religious training. Barbara’s childhood religious experiences certainly seem to have been noteworthy harbingers of her life to come. Her account suggests not only a warm congenial atmosphere, but one that provided many opportunities for religious instruction, friendship building, community service, and bonding among relatives and friends. In I Remember Opelousas (1997), an autobiographical narrative published for her grandchildren, Barbara wrote:

My church—St. Mark’s Methodist Church, on Market Street—added a lot of flavor to my personal gumbo. I remember a lot of ministers coming to pastor us throughout my childhood. Reverend Frank Aldridge and his family came from Baton Rouge. I made friends with his daughters Ellen and Naomi. Ellen began to teach me to knit; however, I never learned enough stitches to make useful things. Yet I liked trying.

As a result of her interaction with the pastor’s family, she also developed a lifelong concern for the elderly. She continued:

Reverend Aldridge visited the old people in their homes and brought them Holy Communion. The girls and I would go with him. I remember how happy our seasoned hosts would be when we visited them. The reverend would ask me to sing. I always would sing “Blessed Assurance.” Sometimes the seniors would rock back and forth as we sang or even shed a tear. When we finished visiting, Reverend Aldridge rewarded us with warm,
fresh bread or goodies from the bakery. Little did the Reverend, his daughters, or I know then that one day I would find myself married to a preacher.

Barbara also expressed an appreciation for certain ceremonial rites. She “especially like communion services when the cross in the church was lit for these special moments alone.” In church Barbara developed a strong appreciation for music. While her mother was in the adult choir, Barbara sang in the junior choir. As she recalled, she, her mother and “other choir members sang [their] hearts out as Maude, our pastor’s daughter, played the piano.” Because she “often attended both rehearsals, [she] learned many of the hymns in the Methodist Hymnal as a little girl....The songs have blessed me to this day,” she affirmed.

Not only were Barbara and her mother active in the church, but other relatives were as well:

My Aunt Lou Barber was on the stewardess board. She and other ladies of the church would go and clean the church. I would go with them and dust the pews. They would bring bananas and tea cakes to me. I often wondered if I really wanted to help them clean or if I was there to collect the snacks. I suppose both were true.

My uncle Alcide Gabriel was a class leader. Class meetings were held at church on Tuesday nights. He was special, and I was his girl. I loved going to class meetings with him. He would let me hold the flashlight as we walked the long dark streets from his home to St. Mark Methodist. (They would give testimonies and take care of the financial responsibilities of the church. Each church leader would have a certain group of people that they would collect dues from every Tuesday night.) He had a beautiful gold pocket watch with a compass. He would let me hold it and I would watch the compass.

Uncle Alcide would also make fire in the big heater in the church where coal was used for fuel.\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\) Barbara Lessie Kossie, I Remember Opelousas (Houston, TX: Ameri-Quest International, 1997), 24—25.
Barbara also remembered several colorful church members who impressed her for reasons ranging from good praying to snuff-dipping:

I remember Brother Robert Nash, the steward who led prayer. I was always tickled when he prayed. He’d say “Lord, You heard Daniel in the Lions Den, You heard Shadrachmeshackabednego in the fiery furnace. “Hear your humble servant as I pray!” I thought “Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego” was one long name....

Mrs. Agnes Williams, who lived on Leo Street, was my favorite Sunday school teacher. She taught the junior girls. No one wanted to be promoted from her class. She made Sunday School fun, perhaps because she was also a public school teacher....

There were old ladies at the church who liked to kiss the children. I would try to wipe the kisses off, especially those of one old lady named Aunt Ronnie who chewed tobacco. Yuck! My cheek would smell like tobacco all the way home. How miserable I felt; I didn’t like that scent at all!

Barbara’s childhood recollections moreover suggest that the entire community appreciated gospel music. When she and her friends walked home from church during the day, “the singing did not stop. Music rang out in the air as everyone, it seemed, listened to Reverend Charles Fuller from California singing ‘Heavenly Sunshine.’ Radios, hot items at the time, would be turned up very loud throughout the community.”

Barbara, too, had a sense of the greater Methodist church. She recalled that “[t]he Methodist conference was held at [her] church one year:”

I remember people attending from other cities in Louisiana. Behind the church under the beautiful trees tables were spread with food, food, food. Sweet potatoes pies, fried chicken, potato salad, and other Southern delicacies the ladies prepared. I had never seen so much food at one time as I witnessed during the conference. We were singing and preaching and eating, and meeting other Christian friends.\(^1^9\)

\(^{1^9}\) *Ibid.*, 27.
Her early-childhood religious experiences were not confined to Methodism. Below she recalled a tangential, albeit comical, experience with an outdoor baptismal ceremony, Baptist-style:

Right next to my Aunt’s house was a Baptist Church. One Sunday I heard them singing outside the church. A melodious refrain filled the air: “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry.” I climbed to look over the wooden fence and was told that they were “baptizing.” I saw a pond dug behind the church with little frogs leaping around it. Scared to death of frogs, I decided I never wanted to get baptized. \(^\text{20}\)

While Barbara certainly learned in later years that frog-free baptismal services could be arranged, she recalled walking to “Little Zion Baptist Church where [her] cousin Josie White Mitchell was the pianist and [her] friend Rose Williams’s relative, Reverend Simon, was the pastor.” \(^\text{21}\)

In addition to her visits to the Baptist church, Barbara also recounted telling experimental moments with Catholicism:

I visited Holy Ghost Catholic church with Mom Edna, Preston’s mother-in-law. It was a long walk from South Street to Block Street where the church was located. As we walked to church the morning was quiet and still; no one was out playing or working. I guess everyone was still in bed except me and the Catholics! On Fridays at her house no one ate meat. I did not like meat very much any how.

[Moma Edna] lived on South Street. She was a devout catholic and taught me all the rosary. I never knew what the priest was saying as the mass was in Latin. Their Priest was Father Holland. They kneeled so much. I was not accustomed to kneeling in my church except on communion Sunday. We’d kneel at the altar for Holy Communion. I asked Mom Edna if I had to kneel every time she kneeled. She said, “No you are a visitor.” I would make he sign of the cross when she did. I liked to smell the incense in the church, and I liked it when the priest sprinkled Holy water. \(^\text{22}\)

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 18.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 30.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 31.
Some of Barbara’s recollections also suggest that the church was an excellent place for black children to find good, and even fascinating, role models. While she remembered being fond of her family physician, Dr. Terrence, whom she described as “a very handsome black man” who “attended the Methodist Church,” she was particularly taken by her first encounter with a black nun:

One day I met a colored nun from another city whose mother lived in Opelousas. When she visited, she could not sleep in her mother’s house but had to go to the convent to sleep with the other nuns. I wondered why she could not spend the night at her mother’s house. I thought “This church is Holy! I’d like to be a nun!” Of course, if I had been, you [grandchildren] would not be here!  

Barbara was not alone in her religious affiliation with Methodism. So too was Roy. While he did not attend church as regularly in his childhood as Barbara did, Roy returned to the Methodist church he had initiated his adulthood search for the divine. He even ventured out and joined the deacon board. But according to his observations the quest for nineteenth-century Weslayan “perfectionism” had somehow escaped the twentieth-century group of brethren that he encountered.  

Disappointed with the general lack of spirituality, Roy’s interest in their mentorship began to wane. Nonetheless, his inner search for deeper spiritual understanding continued until he found himself among the “saved” and “sanctified.”

The attraction of new religious movements to African Americans like Roy and Barbara did not escape the critical eye of Ruby Funchess Johnson who in her 1956 study noted the “rapid increases in the membership of Holiness churches or similar institutions

---

23 Ibid., 16.
24 Ibid., 31.
25 Purportedly, when Kossie asked one deacon if it was spiritually acceptable to smoke, the deacon responded nonverbally by pointing to a non-scriptural passage in the appendix of a Bible, the pages of which he slammed shut before Kossie had the chance to read them. Kossie remembered that others “thought nothing of getting sloppy drunk” on Sunday nights or of having extramarital affairs. When friends cautioned a particular deacon about his infidelity, he retorted with a laugh: “Houston is too big to get caught!”
as Protestants in urban areas constantly sought new religions... [despite] the decreasing strength of some of the new faiths.” According to Johnson, almost every aspect of the conventional black church was being lost to education, urbanization, and secularization, including testimonials, spirituals, emotionalism, supernaturalism, and even prayer. This was good news to Johnson who held firmly that “[m]en should pursue the logical and discard the irrational,” and that “men should seek the divine in life”... “[i]nstead of contemplating a supersensory supremacy of the higher principle.”

Johnson derided “cult” movements and the “[n]onexperimental action” that was prominent among those who embraced newer faiths. Suggesting that experiential religion and logic were diametrically opposed, Johnson contended that the refusal of worshippers to “convert” to modernity, as opposed to more individualistic expressions of Christianity, was problematic:

Most of the nonconformists carr[ied] decaying traditional practices with them and transfigur[ed] these by bizarre sensational additions. This tenacious grip upon old practices indicate[d] cultural or religious retardation as far as the system of action in its entirety [was] concerned. Though there [was] variation among the new religions as far as the extent of emotional religious acuos [was] concerned, nonexperimental action [was] a conspicuous general feature.

While Johnson’s either-or analysis deemed expressive forms of worship as signs of cultural backwardness, her contemporary, anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston realized that African Americans of the “Sanctified Church” (black Pentecostals) had initiated a creative form of cultural protest against the “highbrow tendencies” of black mainline Protestants. As Cheryl Townsend Gilkes noted in her study, black Pentecostals were among the first twentieth-century African Americans to take charge of their

---

27 Ibid.
29 Study to be relocated.
identity and of their theology, calling themselves “saints,” when post Reconstruction southern propaganda of labeled all blacks as robbers, muggers, and rapists. Distancing themselves from societal expectations, saints when among each other also bypassed the class-oriented titles “Mr.” and “Mrs.,” and chose rather to refer to one another as “Sister” and “Brother.” In essence, they were insisting on the legitimacy of their pre-liberationist/pre-constructionist theology.

African American Pentecostals of the Latter Rain movement also opposed concentrating all of their attention on the contemporary quest for social equality; they insisted that social freedom was empty without a spiritual dimension. As William J. Seymour had done during the Azusa Revival of 1906, they prayed and fasted for a spiritual revival that welcomed “all people of all faiths.” They believed that if hearts and minds were converted, physical manifestations of justice and righteousness would prevail. Their position appealed to many American Christians who had grown weary of the boundaries segregating one group of Christians from the other. Opting to reject conformity, they embraced scriptural interpretation privileging inclusion, diversity, and “a move of God.”

Intent on “doing a work for the Lord” and free of denominational restrictions and requirements, many of the young people who chose the route of African American Independent Pentecostalism (AAIP) initiated evangelical and pastoral undertakings not long after they had learned how to “quote a few scriptures” and “get a prayer through.” Although many of them enjoyed the excitement and wonder associated with the Latter Rain movement, time and tests of endurance distinguished the “called” from the “chosen.”

Given the strict codes of behavior required of Pentecostalism, skeptical family members and friends believed that their newly converted relatives, especially the young ones, would find such asceticism to be not only unrealistic, but unnecessary; so they sat in the background and marked time, waiting to see how long “it” would last. “You know you can go too far with that stuff,” Barbara recalled her mother saying. She also
remembered one of her husband’s aunt’s offering the young bride a word of caution: “You know I hear when they git that stuff, some of ’em don’t think they need a wife.” The same aunt announced to the family: “You can say what you want to. That boy donc lost his mind.” While Barbara and Roy were certain that they were still sane, they understood their relatives’ concern. None could quite comprehend why the two seemed to make such drastic changes in their lifestyle. Moreover, none was accustomed to the boundless, uninhibited behavior of Pentecostals in praise. The life-changing joy that adherents experienced through the Latter Rain Movement seemed to leave them speechless as the following song captured:

I’ve got it! I’ve got it!
I’ve got it! I’ve got it!
Something about the Holy Ghost!
I can’t explain it, but I’ve got it!

What could not be expressed in words had to be conveyed through movement and non-verbal gesture; therefore, the saints shouted, screamed, rocked, moaned, cried, fell out under the power, waved their hands, stomped their feet, paced, rolled and took victory laps around the sanctuary, within and sometimes without. Even after such enthusiastic happenings at church, saints “high on Jesus” would sometimes continue their expressions of joy at home; they “just couldn’t praise Him enough.” According to their testimony, the contagion was profound and real. It was this encounter with what Kossie described as “joy speakable and full of glory” that him to join the Latter Rain movement.

Like his spiritual forefathers, he had already commenced a quiet internal search for a deeper spirituality even before being formally introduced to the Latter Rain movement. Having grown up in a large, fun-loving family, his relatives were concerned about his now pensive mood. He admits that even while going to the clubs and ordering “spirits” for his
buddies, he found himself dousing heated male banter and braggadocio with questions about heaven, hell, and eternity. "What's gotten into you, man?" one of his friends inquired. Kossie did not understand the developments himself. He only knew that something had begun to beckon him away from the dim lights and smoke-filled rooms of the Club Matinée. It was only after an inadvertent trip to an A. A. Allen tent revival on Lockwood with a friend who had gone to retrieve his mother that Roy met with destiny. The year was 1953.30

As he approached a huge tent, Kossie, like others, found himself immediately drawn by music of unprecedented vigor and communicative power. Ropes segregated the audience, but the altar was open to everyone. Noticing that Kossie was moved by what he witnessed, his friend, George McAfee, told him, "I'll bring you back if you want me to." Kossie answered in the affirmative. When he returned the following night, the minister made an altar call and Kossie joined those who stood to receive prayer. "Allen knew how to make an altar call," Kossie remembers with a laugh. "It's one minute 'til midnight,' he'd say. 'Don't wait too late! It's heaven or hell! Which will be your choice?" Energetic and eager, Kossie responded with his feet, making sure that he was the first one at the altar, and that he had secured a prime position directly in front of the pulpit. As A.A. Allen prayed for those gathered, he looked at Kossie and declared, "Son, the Lord is going to save you tonight." After repeating the sinner's prayer—one in which supplicants request forgiveness and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives—Kossie threw away his cigarettes and vowed not to drink anymore. Thereafter, altar workers took him to a smaller adjacent tent where he witnessed "even little children, their little lips quivering, their cheeks wet with tears as they cried out to God."31

---

30 During the same year, but on the west coast, Frederick K. C. Price (born January 3, 1932, Santa Monica, California) was converted to Christianity during a Pentecostal tent meeting. Unlike Kossie who was raised Methodist. Price was reared as a Jehovah’s Witness, but did not attend Kingdom Hall services after he reached his teens. For more on Price, see J. Gordon Melton, Phillip Charles Lucas, and Jon R. Stone, *Prime-Time Religion: An Encyclopedia of Religious Broadcasting*, (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1997) 265.

31 Basing their belief on I Corinthians 3: 16-17, saints still believe that their bodies are "temples of the God." For this reason, they do not smoke or drink. I Corinthians 3: 16: "Know ye not that ye are the..."
Although Kossie had not felt anything dramatic, he stayed there until everyone had left, determined to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Because he was without transportation at the time, “two white gentlemen brought [him] home.” His wife, Barbara, pregnant with their second child, and first-born son were asleep. However, when Roy entered his bedroom, Barbara sat up startled. According to her recollection his countenance “seemed to glow in the dark.” “Where have you been?” she asked. Roy informed her that he had gone to a tent meeting and was now “saved.” Although Barbara was not quite sure what he meant, she noticed the following day that he stopped smoking and had put down the bottle. Astonished by it all, she vowed to see what had changed her husband so fast. The following night, she, Roy, and his sister-in-law, Lucinda Kossie, went to the tent meeting. Barbara responded to the altar call and was “slain in the spirit.” Within a few days of attending the revival, she began to speak in tongues. “Man I was sick,” Kossie recalled. “I tried my best to speak in tongues. In fact, I said everything they told me to say. But it was in here,” Kossie said pointing to his head. “Not here,” he continued, placing his hand on his belly, where the scripture affirms the Holy Spirit resides.32“This was the last night of the revival and I hadn’t received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. ‘How is it that she got it before I did?’ I felt terrible, because, you see, I thought the preacher had to give it to me. How was I gonna get it and [the preacher] was leaving town?” Saddened but determined, Kossie went home and committed to daily prayer and Bible reading. Finally, one day while Kossie was in prayer, “the Spirit of the Lord showered upon [him]...It was as if heaven had opened up!” Kossie stated as he relived the moment’s excitement, “I began to lose control of my tongue. “This was it!”

32 Scriptural support for their belief is found in St. John 7: 38 where Christ stated the following: “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”
Kossie remembered. A favorite Latter Rain song attempts to capture the adherents' interpretation of the moving of the Spirit in metaphor:

There is a river of life flowing out of me  
It makes the dumb to talk and the blind to see  
There is a river of life flowing out of me  
There is a river of life flowing out of me

Moreover, they could sing a praise which indicated that Holy Spirit baptism was not to be found in the secular realm, for it was spiritually discerned. Careful to remember that the joy experienced was born of the God, saints emphasized its spiritual engendering:

This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it to me  
This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it to me  
This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it to me  
The world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away.

With the lyrics of such songs to reinforce his experience, Kossie was determined not to “go back into the world.” In an effort to experience every aspect of his renewed life, he made rapid spiritual strides through two years of fasting, prayer, and bible-reading. A few months after his conversion and baptism, he accepted a call to ministry. Demonstrating the excitement that the Latter Rain Movement fomented in him, within three years of his Holy Spirit Baptism, Kossie accepted a call to ministry. Even though Kossie did not have formal theological training, he learned “churchology” firsthand through what he terms “The School of Hard Knocks.”

In the fall of 1955, Kossie and his wife “worked out” (started) their church by holding cottage prayer meetings in their home, the traditional approach to church-building.

33 Kossie’s employ of the phrase “This was it!” suggests again the ineffability of the experience of Holy Spirit baptism. So happy he was that he “took off running a mile down the track.” He ran back home and told his wife that “it” had happened. Equally ecstatic, she exclaimed, “Ooo. Now, you’ve got me started!”

34 This praise song no doubt draws on the many scriptures containing water imagery suggesting life, renewed joy, and abundance. For example, in Isaiah 12:2-3 the prophet asserts the following: (2) “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song he is also become my salvation. (3) Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.
among young ministers during that time. Thereafter, he accepted an invitation from Mother McAfee to pastor a church that she and her late husband had contracted approximately two blocks off of Bennington on Lockwood in northeast Houston. During his short one-year tenure there, Kossie gained a faithful member and convert in Sister Viola Miller, originally from Ville Platte Louisiana. In addition, Elder Samuel Mingo\textsuperscript{35} assisted Kossie in ministry.

As a result of his acquaintance with Mother McAfee, Kossie started traveling with her to Humble, Texas, where McAfee held prayer meetings with area senior citizens who, although saved, had no church home. Even though the small group did not own a building initially, members who resided in the area secured an old, vacant structure for worship. While Kossie and Samuel Mingo ministered, Mingo earned a reputation as an excellent Sunday School teacher and superintendent.\textsuperscript{36}

Continuing along his course, from 1957 to 1961 Kossie and his Humble congregation rented a building on Bartersville Road,\textsuperscript{37} named after a little section where “colored” people lived. The church was perhaps aptly named “The House of Prayer.” for Kossie would need divine wisdom to manage what quickly became a “family” church of approximately twenty interrelated members, none of whom was related to the pastor or his wife. The secretary of the church, realizing the political power she wielded, began to stir up unfounded commotion over the books. She intimidated senior citizens who wanted to tithe, threatening to tell their government case workers how they were handling their finances. Although frightened from giving a tenth of their income, the seniors would “fold up two or three dollars” and press them in pastors hand anyway simply “because they loved the Lord.” Although the scripture had affirmed that the “laborer was worthy

\textsuperscript{35} Samuel Mingo is currently pastor of Ebenezer House of Prayer, Church of God in Christ, located in the Settygast community in northeast Houston. He and his congregation purchased their church from Pastor Ezzie Mae Williams and her congregation, Miracle Deliverance Holiness Church, located in East Houston near I-10.

\textsuperscript{36} During Kossie’s brief hiatus in Humble, Mother Sanders began to attend Pastor Wyatt’s church which was just down the street from her house.

\textsuperscript{37} Bartersville Road is now referred to as the 1960 FM bypass.
of his hire,” Kossie, a gainfully employed beef boner, was not expecting to support his large family on the limited offerings of his small congregation. Initially siding with the pastor, members asked Kossie to take the books from the woman due to her contentious nature; however, no sooner than he heeded their advice, blood ties made family members recant. With Kossie’s authority largely immobilized by the power of nepotism, he decided to “let them have it,”\(^3\)\(^8\) despite their members’ dream to build a new church.\(^3\)\(^9\) Little did Kossie know that his education was hardly over. More challenging courses lay ahead.

**Other Aspects of Spiritual Migration:**

Having no seminary designated to interpreting their belief system when they started their independent ministry, Roy and Barbara benefitted from a flexible network of experiential knowledge shared by ministers through tapes, books, and sermons. They also relied on the teachings of their former pastor, Bishop J. L. Parker and on the recorded teachings of A.A. Allen and other evangelists whose messages met their spiritual needs. As was the trend among early Pentecostals, ministers emphasized the importance of studying of “the Word” as opposed to abstract theology. This means that they and the people around them became both the object and subject of their theology. “God” was interpreted through the prism of their personal experiences and those of others within and without their immediate community. Given that Roy and Barbara were black, southern, and blue-collar middle class, it is certain that issues of class and race would lead them to establish an interpretation of divinity that was sympathetic, but not limited to, their lived experiences.

Like many new converts to Holy Spirit Baptism, Roy and Barbara entered a spiritual dimension that was completely unfamiliar to them, one replete with unexplained

---


\(^3\)\(^9\) The proposed edifice would have been located on highway 59. Their dream was never realized.
phenomena, dreams, and visions that scholars have hesitated to examine. As the academy has often frowned upon the nonempirical wherever it is found, the only aspects of Pentecostalism that have generally gained attention are those that anthropologists, sociologists, and historians can observe, measure, or describe e.g., drumming, shouting, ecstatic worship, sociological data. Scholars who do acknowledge the Pentecostal emphasis on “the spirit” and all its manifold interpretations, both good and evil, have often gone to great lengths to discount claims as either slight of the hand or slips of the mind.

While Pentecostals believe that the art of illusion and mental disorders help to explain certain developments, they are sure that neither of the two covers all dimensions of the human experience. Those who have witnessed spiritual phenomena for decades on end are therefore convinced that the spirit world as described in the Bible “is real.” Their level of certainty increases when personal experiences are confirmed by unknown others outside their established circles. For this reason, they take Paul literally when he said of himself and New Testament Christians “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

The Saints’ manner of “dealing” with the unseen, however, is anchored firmly in the scripture. Their beliefs are reinforced as they learn not only to “walk with the Lord,” but to identify the “wiles of the devil.” They associate the Lord (Eternal goodness) with love, truth, light, unity, wholeness, wisdom, understanding, and purity. The devil, on the other hand, they associate with fear, falsehood, intimidation, confusion, disunity, imprudence, backwardness, and immorality. While saints believe all devout Christians have been granted power to “resist” the devil.

---

40 Ephesians 6:10-13. (KJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (13) Where take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
by virtue of a consistent Christian walk, saints hold that resolving certain demonic cases require fasting and prayer.

Roy and Barbara began to learn about various aspects of "spiritual warfare" early in their ministry. Not long after his conversion, Roy, his family, and even the dog, were subjected to a barrage of strange happenings that still remain vivid in the memories of all concerned. Barbara remembers the family dog being tormented as soon as Roy left the house for work in the morning. As if on cue, the dog would duck, dodge, wimper, and yelp, almost strangling himself to get away from whatever it was that she could not see.

Within the same period, Roy himself began to see "all kinds of horrible things," at inadvertent times giving his wife play-by-play accounts of ethereal visions that presented themselves unannounced, e.g., bloody severed heads floating in mid air on jagged sticks or gargoyle like creatures stalking the night. Or he might hear water splashing against walls that remained completely dry. His encounters were so hair-raising at times that Barbara finally asked that he save her the details. Yet she and Roy found the parental courage to confront their unbelievable circumstances when they discovered that their children were "under attack."

Both recalled being awakened by their oldest daughter shrieking as she pointed into mid air with a horrified look on her face, "He bit me!" At first they thought she was merely having a nightmare until, fully awake, she persisted to point at a being they could not see. Deeply concerned about the psychological effect that such events were having on his family, Roy shared their experiences with Mother Sanders, the head mother of their church. Seasoned in "spiritual warfare," Sanders explained to him that he and his family were under demonic attack because of his decision to walk with God. "The enemy is trying to frighten you away from your calling. But he's a liar." Little did the Kossie's
know that they were experiencing what Eddie Smith termed a “demonic visitation” as opposed to a “demonic habitation.”

If you engage in intercession and effective spiritual ministry, you will be visited by demonic spirits from time to time. We are in a real war, and Satan is not shooting blanks. It is serious business to be serious about and His kingdom!

To remedy Kossie and his family’s situation, nonetheless, Mother Sanders and Mother Butler, came to the Kossie’s house to “cast the devil out.” Roy and his wife learned their first lesson in spiritual warfare, i.e., to “take authority over the enemy,” as the two church Mothers anointed the windows of the his house with oil and prayed that the enemy be bound and expelled. As the group gathered in the living room to close their meeting, Mother Butler (a veteran saint and friend) had a vision of two white horses in pursuit of two black ones, a sure sign of victory given the current symbolism, one that all the Kossies were more than happy to celebrate. Yet as subsequent spiritual experiences attested, “the enemy had only gone for a season.”

Because of their demonstrative spirituality, saints like Mothers Sanders and Baker were often mistaken for foretune tellers or spiritualists, neither of which they were. They were simply doing what Eddie Smith referred to as “spiritual housecleaning.” The Mothers’ spiritual sensitivity and insight were gained through fasting, prayer, and holy

---

41 Eddie Smith, “It’s Time for Some Spiritual Housecleaning,” Charisma, February 1998. Smith states the following of demonic habitation: “Demonic habitation occurs when demons are assigned or have decided to inhabit a certain location—such as a home. This is often the result of the willful sin of people who live (or have lived) there, thus giving over “legal ties” or “rights” to the enemy. In a real sense, deliverance for a dwelling must be done much like deliverance for an individual. It is critical to destroy the “contracts” made with darkness by removing the things that attract or enable the enemy and then dedicated the home to God.”

42 Ibid., 68.

According to Smith, common symptoms include: continual bad dreams and nightmares; insomnia; behavioral problems; relational problems; continual fighting and arguing; lack of peace; restless, disturbed children; unexplained, ongoing illness or bondage; seeing “ghosts” or demonic apparitions (an experience particularly common to children); foul, unexplainable odors; and atmospheric heaviness that makes it hard to breathe. (Charisma, 68)
living. The religious symbolism they employed in such cases generally stopped at blessed olive oil that was used to signify the sanctioning presence of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike spiritualists, saints never developed elaborate systems for applying oils, powders or candles. Nor did they use amulets, even though evangelists may have issued "prayer cloths" on occasion. Moreover, saints did not read tarot cards, tea leaves, bones, coffee grinds, astrological charts, or gaze into crystal balls. Basing their beliefs on Old and New Testament accounts, they believe such practices to be demonically inspired and idolatrous. According to the saints, all they needed was the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, the one whom they believed led them into all knowledge of the truth. All that was required according to them was a clean, pliable vessel, willing and ready to accomplish the perfect will of God in the earth.

Saints believed, however, that because "gifts and callings are without repentance," i.e., men and women may indeed possess innate spiritual gifts without experiencing conversion or being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Barbara surmised, for instance, that her mother was clairvoyant. Simmie reported events and developments before they happened with such precision that a neighborhood friend tried to convince her to commercialize her gift, but Simmie refused. Yet those in her immediate circle appreciated her special sense of knowing.

In addition to innate spiritual gifts, saints believe that men and women can be conferred spiritual gifts through affiliation with good or evil. For while Paul encouraged New Testament Christians to desire spiritual gifts so that they could "edify" the body of Christ, he suggested his strong stand against sorcery when he cast a spirit of divination out of a young slave woman whose words of knowledge offended him. As a result, he was imprisoned for robbing her master of the income that the woman provided him through her science.43

---

43 Acts 16: 16-24. (KJV)
Yet gifts were not granted for self-aggrandizement or show-boating. This is not to suggest, however, that the “workings of the spirit” do not sometimes evoke sincere drama and excitement. But is does mean that seasoned saints, no matter how gifted, were all tempered by Christ’s warning that they could easily “have their part in the lake of fire” if their spiritual efforts were not God-centered.

Saints believe that spiritual gifts cannot be turned on and off at will, although they might be “stirred up” and even honed through acts of contrition (fasting and praying) and “yielding to the spirit” (agreeing to seek God’s purpose and do his will). Holy Spirit baptism essentially provided saints with access to the divine on an “as-needed” basis. When they sought the Lord for spiritual understanding, wisdom, or assistance of some kind, they were taught to expect answers. These divine responses were communicated through dreams, visions, miraculous developments, or words of knowledge from within (God speaks directly to the individual) or without (God speaks to the individual through others who may or may not be aware that they are being used as messengers).

Both Roy’s and Barbara’s memories are full of such instances. Barbara remembers when she and her husband were learning to exercise the spiritual gifts of “knowledge” and “discernment.”

Early our ministry, when the Lord was teaching both of us to hear his voice, he [Roy] and I had spiritual experiences that really increased our faith in God and in each other. When we were just babes in the Lord, the spirit of God would reveal things to Roy. He would often tell me exactly what was going to happen in a church service before we even got there, even down to what people would say...verbatim. Often when we were on our way to church, he’d say “Now, so-and-so is going to say this and so-and-so is going to do that.” I used to be amazed by how precise he was.

Developing spiritually along with her husband, Barbara was given divine messages that were edifying to the church, her family, and to her:

Of course, the Lord began to deal with me too. I would prophecy before the congregation, and the Lord also give me dreams that had meaning. For
example, before I knew I was pregnant with twins, I had a dream about two dolls, a girl and a boy. Knowing that I had four kids at the time, I guess the Lord didn’t want me to be surprised by my doctor’s report. As sure as the world, when I went to see Dr. Turboff he told me that I was going to have twins. “I know,” I said. He looked surprised.

On another occasion, while Barbara was riding to church with her husband, she was suddenly overwhelmed with grief. She had a spiritual unction that a tragedy had occurred in Humble, Texas, where she and her husband were pastoring at the time. Within minutes of their arrival home, they received a telephone call that confirmed her suspicions. One of their members (the church secretary) had been killed in a hit and run auto/pedestrian accident. According to a foreboding prophecy given earlier about the woman in question, “her blood ... dried up in the streets.”

Roy and Barbara also learned that they could “move the hand of God” with their requests, which were largely honored according to their faith. As his family grew, Roy began to pray for a better job, one that not only paid a heftier salary, but that also allowed him to attend church regularly, which in those days meant “seven nights a week.” After a failed attempt to secure a raise on the job he held, he finally told his supervisor that the Lord was going to bless him with a better job. “You just be sure and let God do it,” the supervisor said sarcastically. Typical of saints who believe in an immediacy of the divine, Roy made his request during a prayer meeting at Bishop J.L. Parker’s Bible Way Church of Holiness in Trinity Gardens, his church home at the time. During the course his prayer, he had a vision of two hands emerging from a cloud to retrieve a shiny vessel. Kossie told Bishop Parker what he had seen. Interpreting the vision for him, Parker said simply, “Son, the Lord’s letting you know that he’s received your prayers.” According to Kossie, the following occurred:

---

44 Barbara’s spiritual gift has persisted throughout the years. As she spoke to her seventh child on the telephone, she had a vision of a cute little baby girl sitting in front of the mirror. A veteran of spiritual matters, she knew that her son and his wife were expecting a baby before the son revealed the matter to her. Once he did, she told him she saw a little girl, even though Gerald insisted on a boy. Perhaps his mother was there to reinforce the will of God. An adorable little girl they had, indeed.
Shortly thereafter, the spirit of the Lord spoke to me and told me to go to a particular packing company to ask for employment. So I did. But when I went there they said they didn’t have any positions open, but that Swift did. ‘Swift?’ I said surprised. I hadn’t heard of them. Neither did I even realize that the company was located behind this company that I’d gone to. The Lord knew that. That’s why he sent me to the company he knew I was familiar with. To make a long story short, the Lord blessed me with that job. It was the best one I ever had....He blessed me so that my former supervisor, the one who tried to poke fun at me, asked me if I would help him get on.

In addition to visions concerning personal concerns, Kossie often had dreams that shed light on issues of broader spiritual import. Concerned by the symptoms of self-hatred that he witnessed among blacks in interdenominational circles, many of whom seemed to fall prey too easily to religious charlatans, he questioned God about the matter and was given his answer in a dream:

In this dream, I and a minister I knew entered a building that had two levels. He and I went upstairs to the second level. The room we entered was full of white men and fine, fine furniture, china, crystal and all. When I looked around the room, I noticed that a long, huge snake was intertwined throughout the furniture. I said to myself, ‘Let me kill this snake.’ But as I prepared to kill the snake a voice spoke to me and said, ‘but you’ll mess up all this fine furniture.’ Taken aback by what I heard, I took my the axe and went downstairs. The other minister, on the otherhand stayed up there for a while. Once his excitement wore off he finally came down.

Interpreting his own dream, Kossie continued:

I believe the Lord was showing me two things. First of all, he was confirming what I had begun to realize—that according to a lot of our people in those days, white ministers could do no wrong. You know, blacks in those days had so little and white folks so much that some of our people almost worshipped white evangelists, acted almost as if they were gods. In fact, some even thought that if you pointed out error in a white man’s ministry, God would killed you. One Sister told me that when I warned her that particular minister was crooked. Some of our people were so gullible. Oppression and hard times had made them that way. At the same time, the minister staying up there for a while and eventually coming down meant that in time our people would come to a greater spiritual understanding, that they would stop mistaking material gain for godliness and true spirituality. But the fact that the Lord didn’t let me kill that snake meant that even though evil was present, some good was still being done. Souls were being
saved, people were being delivered. You see, God is moved by faith not people or their shortcomings. In other words, precious people might be hurt if I acted to swiftly or harshly. Like the parable of the wheat and the tares, I’d simply have to use wisdom, exercise patience with the matter, and let God do the separating.

Later, in 1971, Kossie was also given a dream that became the blueprint for his extended ministry, one that he has never ceased to share with his congregation:

In this dream, I was walking down a street lined with small churches, all filled with sheep with their heads hung down low. The farther away I walked from the churches, my feet grew heavier and heavier. But I continued to walk until a voice said, ‘Go back and feed my sheep.’ I tried to keep walking in the same direction, but the voice spoke again, “Son, feed my sheep.” So, I did. When I went to church, I shared the dream with Pastor Crawford who confirmed that the Lord was going to have me lead a fellowship of small churches.

Yet another dream suggested that while accomplishing God’s perfect will for his ministry would not be easy, he would have the constant support of at least one congregation:

In this dream, I was on an airplane with members from the Miracle House of Prayer.\(^{45}\) As we flew, we entered some very turbulent weather. The plane rocked and reeled for while. Finally, it landed with everyone safe and sound. Down through the years, that’s the way its been. We’ve gone through some difficult times, some tough times, but the Miracle House of Prayer has been right there with us. They have been true friends to this ministry. That’s what the Lord was showing me through that dream. God is real, baby!

As each of the aforementioned accounts suggest, Kossie and many other independent Pentecostals participated in a supportive spiritual network that was nurturing and responsive. His and his wife’s experiences also indicated that while the scripture remained the primary guidebook for living and conduct, they believed in a very

\(^{45}\) The Miracle House of Prayer is located at 601 East 38th Street. Pastor Leola Crawford was the founding pastor. Pastor W. L. Jennings is the current pastor. It has two sister churches. One is located in Freeport, TX and is pastored by Eddie B. Leadon, the elder sister of W. L. Jennings. The other is located in Arcola, TX and is pastored by Lorenzo Coleman, former Assistant Pastor to W. L. Jennings.
active God who expected to be entreated, one who was concerned about whatever concerned them, be they "things seen" or "unseen."
Monday, November 28, 1960, Roy Kossie wrote the following thoughts in his journal:

About 11 o’clock P.M. find[s] me talking to my wife about my calling as a minister. Approx. three months ago I left my job so the Lord could have his way with me, however nothing has happen in the way that I thought it would, and I had to go back to work to make ends meets. Christmas is right around the corner. I am found with 10 members in my household. Only working 2 and 3 days a week, 219.00 cash in my pocket, with bills that will take every cent before Christmas, unless I can manage otherwise. I had to mortgage my property to get enough money to pay some of my bills there is work which my wife want[s] done on the home, which I don’t have money enough to do right now, however, I could have done it before I left my job, but I felt the call of the Lord so strong I feared to keep on working, and felt that it was more necessary to step out on what I felt to be the Lord calling. The Lord has bless us with a darling baby son,¹ and we do praise him for it, but we were able to by less for this baby than any. My wife ha[s] expressed very much pain and unhappiness to me, she at times seems to be very offended at me because of leaving my job. She told me that she had never been so unsatisfied with me. I have suffered much agony of spirit and mind, but my hopes are still high my faith is looking up. I cannot give up, but I must continue to seek the Lord’s perfect will and trust the Lord that my wife do[es]n’t lose complete confidence in me, she has said tonight she do[es]n’t know exactly how she feel[s] toward my calling and had not given it much thought. I do know that there are two sides to everything. May Jesus my savior help me to consider my wife’s side with an understanding heart. And give me the wisdom how to press onward according to his word that never fails.²

His experience helps to highlight the pre-modern theological approach employed by many young AAIPs pastors of the Southwest. As his account suggests, Kossie’s spiritual journey was not without its challenges. Unlike Christ, who never married, and Ulysses whose spouse remained at home, Kossie had to weigh what he believed he had

¹ Gerald (Jed) Wayne Kossie (born October 12, 1960) was the “darling son” to which Kossie referred. Having gone to college on a basketball scholarship, Gerald Kossie is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University. He is currently a deacon at T.D. Jakes’s Potter’s House in Dallas, TX.
“heard from God” against what he heard from his wife. In fact, her resistance to what he now admits was “youthful zeal without knowledge” and untempered by patience, was often the subject of the portion of his journal that he shared with me for this project.

Life must have already been challenging for this young twenty-nine-year-old father of seven, his twenty-seven-year-old wife, and her physically challenged mother. With so much responsibility already on his shoulders, why would he want to preach? Certainly, no immediate prestige accompanied doing so, especially given that he was becoming an African American Independent Pentecostal preacher. As with so many small black Pentecostal pastors, beginnings were quite laborious and often full of disappointment and setback. Because their members possessed limited resources, access to money could not have been the motivation. Kossie contends to this day that he was simply “called.” Even in the aforementioned entry, while he clearly expressed a desire to understand his wife’s position, he did not want the resulting negotiations to negate what he sincerely felt to be his spiritual purpose. He wished everyone’s happiness, including his own.

With Christmas around the corner, nonetheless, Kossie quickly reasoned that “[o]ne of the most spiritual things” he could do given the circumstances was to “get a job.” He also learned a lesson that he continues to reiterate to his congregation: “The Lord doesn’t rush you into making hasty decisions. Even when you believe he has spoken, put time on it, and wait for confirmation.” Including himself in some of his examples, he pulls out one case after the other of ministers who “got ahead of God” often to the detriment, even destruction, of their families.

---

3 I acquired this quotation from Houston’s Pastor John Osteen of the Oasis of Love. Osteen offered this piece of advice to a young preacher who was wondering whether or not his working a secular job undercut his purported walk of faith as a pastor.
Yet he realizes that he and his contemporaries were products of their spiritual environment. The prevailing trend among early Pentecostals was to trust God for almost everything. Their faith walk, therefore, was completely different from modern conceptions of the same. One of his favorite examples concerns present-day Charismatic conferences in which those who wish to attend must pay a registration fee in order to participate. In that past, never would such have occurred. Kossie declares: "The pastors today tell you to walk by faith, but they guarantee theirs ahead of time. You have to send in $100 dollars for yourself and $75 for your wife, and then they take up two and three offerings after you get there. That’s not faith; that’s robbery. Not only that, they’re catering to certain segment of the population. A small pastor, trying to make ends meet, might not have the money to pay. The scripture says ‘[f]reely you have received, freely give.” 4 Thus while contemporary AAIC pastors see the registration fee as an organized way to cover business expenses, he and other ministers in his generation often interpret the same not only as “charging” for the gospel but as turning Christianity into a bourgeois enterprise.

Also intrinsic in Kossie’s entry is the early black Pentecostal desire to “endure hardness as good soldiers.” 5 The tenacity they demonstrated was exhibited by many black southerners whose callous social environment required developing tough skin. Nicholas C. Cooper-Lewter and Henry H. Mitchell would argue that Kossie was embracing “soul theology” which is based on what Western Christian thought refers to as “the Providence of God”. 6

In academic circles such an attitude may be called a “positive world view. It is the deep and sweeping assertion that the whole universe is friendly or benevolent, and that its Creator is able and willing to turn into good ends whatever may occur. Within Black culture this is a given, but to minds shaped in other cultures, it may seem like wishful thinking—an imagined comfort and escape from reality.

---

4 Matthew 10: 8 (KJV)
5 II Timothy 3: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”
However, among Soul folk it is a foundational and fruitful insistence on which all life and effort depend. There can be no final disproof of it, because the doctrine always refers to ultimate ends; the disbelievers and challengers simply have not waited long enough. Oppressed people are supported by the conviction that the very Lord of the university has guaranteed that their lives will always be worth living.7

Only his “tough-minded optimism”8 coupled with the scriptural support that “all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called unto his purpose,” 9 would help succeed in what he believed to be his mission.

Kossie would have to apply the same level of optimism to his relationship with secular and religious communities at large. By the 1960s Houston had become a far more complicated “town” than it had been when he and other second-generation AAIP pastors founded their churches. Before that time, pastors thrived on the intimate atmosphere of closed communities, each of which possessed its own distinctive flavor—Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Wards, Sunnyside, Acreage Home, Pleasant Ville and Sugar Hill included. With desegregation and integration in full swing, communities and schools experienced rapid change throughout the sprawling metroplex. Houston’s Scenic Woods, Fontaine, Lakewood, and Settygast areas made swift transitions from predominantly white enclaves to chiefly black ones despite students’ efforts at W.E. Rogers, Northwood Middle School, and Smiley High School to promote racial tolerance and fairness.10

All of this coupled with an increasing number of African Americans migrating from various parts of the country in search of employment diffused the authority and prestige enjoyed by first and second generation AAIP pastors. Their power base shrank

7 Ibid.
8 Normal Vincent Peale published a book title The Tough-Minded Optimist (1961). Members of Kossie’s immediate family often refer to him as an “incurable optimist” because of his insistence on seeing the positive side of everything. Considering his disposition, his children better understand why their mother has generally played the role of the “tough-minded realist.” Thus, when they about to embrace nascent dreams, their father is the one they generally talk to. However, when they are ready to “see it for what it really is,” they rely on their mother’s candor and forthright disposition.
9 Romans 8:28.
10 My sister Viki (Kossie) Duncan organized a racial tolerance campaign on the M.B. Smiley High School campus. A story recounting the event was printed in the Houston Chronicle.
as the city’s increasingly international black community grew and migrated to newer, albeit re-segregated, parts of town. A preliminary study of the economic impact of residential desegregation on historically black neighborhoods in Houston from 1950 to 1990 affirmed that while Houston’s black enclaves escaped the urban riots of the 1960s and 1970s, “the commercial avenues through its historic black neighborhoods displayed the same signs” 11 of socio-economic deterioration. Black pastors, like businessmen, felt the pinch of this dramatic population shift as blacks not only integrated communities, but white churches as well. In addition to the aforementioned sociological changes, four concurrent developments sent seismic rumblings throughout the black Pentecostal church in the Southwest: (1) the death of Charles H. Mason, the founder of COGIC; (2) continued unrest in Texas jurisdictions within the Church of God in Christ; (3) interpretative shifts in “black” cultural expression; and (4) the emergence of the new Charismatic movement, an offshoot of the 1950s Latter Rain movement.

More than a half-century old, the COGIC had experienced phenomenal growth since its founding and had provided a sense a belonging for more than 2000 churches throughout the country. The organization’s historic construction of Mason Temple in Memphis along with its productive Women’s Department made the COGIC attractive to many young pastors and their wives. For a brief moment in 1961 Kossie joined, although he had launched his ministry independently as was the tradition among black Pentecostals. In Houston the following pastors and many others were affiliated with COGIC in the early 1960s: E.W. Wilcotts from Wichita, Kansas; A.C. Nelson (still COGIC); Richard R. Taylor, H.M. Bolden, H. Richardson, and Overseer Brazier. In fact, Kossie’s church hosted the COGIC Metropolitan District Tent Revival, September 4 - 9, 1961 on the corner of Lyons and Lockwood. E.W. Wilcotts was Superintendent of

---

the Metropolitan District and District Missionary Margaret Scotts was in charge of Women’s Day.

Kossie and others could not have chosen a more difficult decade to join the COGIC. The death of Charles H. Mason stunned members of the COGIC organization. Mason had been vested with full authority over the entire organization which then stood at more than three million members, the size of a small country. In accord with the African tradition, Mason he treated and revered like a king. He alone ultimately decided who would do what. With no modern mechanism in place, political battles ensued at every level. According to Missionary Earline Allen, wife of the late Bishop B.E. Allen, the struggle for power in Houston, Texas, started in the 1940s with the death of Bishop H.M. Page in 1944. 12 The first bishop of both Texas and Oklahoma, Page was one of Mason’s original appointees. Under his leadership COGIC in Texas witnessed the construction of the Page Normal Bible Institute in Hearne, Texas (1937), and the birth of The Texas Bulletin, a monthly magazine of the Church of God in Christ, Texas Jurisdiction. The publication helps to debunk certain stereotypical notions concerning black Pentecostals. While sociological studies generally focus on organizational issues, ethnomusicologists on worship styles, and theologians on their abstract concept of God, the Texas Bulletin puts the reader closer to the people themselves. Articles and communications from COGIC members suggest that the commonly used “ignorant-poor-otherworldly” triad recurring in much of the academic scholarship well into the twentieth century was often exaggerated.

The following accounts affirm that many black Pentecostals men and women were not only interested in the success of the Church, but also in the “uplift of the race.” Elder R. E. Ranger, conscious that he was helping to dispell a longstanding stereotype of black Pentecostal intellectual vacuity, reported to the magazine:

---

12 Earline Allen, Birth of a Jurisdiction: Texas South East No. 1, (1995). 1-3. Allen’s work is a unique collection of historical commentary, photographs, and documents related to the COGIC at both the national and state level. Allen is the wife of the late Reverend Allen, pastor and founder of Greater Emanuel COGIC, Houston, TX.
We were the entertaining church for the Baccalaureate services of Gibbons High School. I chose to deliver a prepared sermon for that occasion, to the interest and enjoyment of all. The people have been free to confess that they have not heard a better sermon from any source for that occasion. Many of the members of the faculty have stated that they will never again entertain the prejudice toward our church [COGIC] that they held formerly. Some of the white ladies that were present stated afterward that they had not heard any better from any white minister. I would send you a copy for publication, but it might not be able to find room. Commencement exercises were also held at our church. Attorney T. M. Betts, of Kansas City, delivered the address...\textsuperscript{13}

Elder P.C. McCann of Haskell, Texas, demonstrates an intrinsic belief in continued progress from one generation to the next when he sets out to secure an education for his son:

I moved to Haskell, Texas, nine miles from Rule, Texas. Pray much for us and for our success in the ministry. I am planning to send my son to Page Normal school. He is 13 years old and very smart. Please take the matter up with the business manager and see if there is any work that he can do to help out, as I am in ill health.\textsuperscript{14}

The bulletin also permits noting the degree to which COGIC women resonated with the verve, skill, and industry of their West African ancestors. Suggesting the degree to which they made their presence felt through creative church programs and activities, an unnamed reporter from Denver Heights Church in San Antonio, TX, penned the following:

The many working units of the church are all very busy and actively engaged in a great financial drive for home needs and for the state meeting in July, at Waco. Other churches and pastors of the city have given hearty cooperation. Elder W. O. Anderson, pastor of West end and a number of his followers filled an engagement in which Elder Anderson gave a most enjoyable sermon from St. Matt. 5. Subject, A mountain Experience. At the close of the rally on Sunday night, June 26, reports showed more than $167.00 laid down in cash. Sister Lena


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}
Edwards took first place in amount raised with $42.00 and Sister L. Byrd second place.\textsuperscript{15}

The submission of Miss Eloise Wilson\textsuperscript{16} Beaumont, TX, suggests that despite being COGIC, she also employed religious rhetoric most associated with the Latter Rain Movement:

I am happy to be yet alive in Christ Jesus, having this testimony, that I am saved form this sin cursed world. We are crying out to God to send on the latter rain, and let the fire fall so may be saved and see that there is reality in serving God. My little soul has a great assurance, that when this old tabernacle dissolves, I have a building on high that is not made by man. I am asking the saints to pray for me. Enclosing $1.00 for papers. Miss Eloise Wilson, reporter.\textsuperscript{17}

Working diligently with Bishop Page to nurture the success of the \textit{Texas Bulletin} and Page Normal Bible Institute were Bishop J.H. Galloway of Houston, TX, State Secretary, and Mother Hannah Chandler of Dallas, TX, State Supervisor of women. They assisted him for much of his 37-year career in COGIC. When Page died, Senior Bishop Charles Mason instructed State Secretary J. H. Galloway to join him at the Louisiana state convention where Mason then commissioned Galloway to serve as Bishop of Texas.

Galloway's tenure was short given the fact that appointments generally lasted a lifetime. After seven years of service, September 9, 1951, he died.\textsuperscript{18} Knowing the insecurity that a lack of leadership would produce, Bishop Mason encouraged COGIC pastors in Texas to continue to work together until he had elected a suitable replacement. For the next five years, Mason himself served as overseer of Texas, but trouble was in the camp.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{16} Miss Elouise Wilson eventually became Mother Elouise Law, current State Supervisor for all of Texas. Law's Memorial Church of God in Christ (a member of Texas Southeast) is named after her late husband.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{18} In her account, Earline Allen even notes the time of the bishop's death—7:18 A.M. He attention to such detail suggests her appreciation for Galloway's leadership.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.} 1.
It seems that Galloway’s secretary, Reverend R. E. Ranger fueled the fires. September 28, 1951 Ranger sent letters to various pastors informing them that communications received regarding a meeting to vote on dividing the state and appointing a bishop were unauthorized. The only authorized meeting was scheduled for November 10, 1951 in Dallas, Texas. This was just the beginning of what would become a long career of acerbic letter-writing on Ranger’s part.  

Because of the political struggle that mounted throughout the state, Bishop Mason continued to serve as overseer until 1956. Thereafter Mason divided the single Texas jurisdiction into four regions, each guided by the following appointees: Northwest-Bishop J.E. Alexander; Northeast-Bishop F. L. Haynes; Southwest-Bishop T.D. Iglehart; and Southeast-Bishop R.E. Ranger. The state supervisors who worked with Haynes were Mother Bertha Polk and Mother Emma Barron. Working with Bishop R. E. Ranger in rapid succession were Mother Fern Smith, Mother Loretta Logan, and Mother Allene Williams. Mother Emma Crouch, the aunt of Gospel Music Artist Andraé Crouch, worked with Bishop T. D. Iglehart. The only state mother to assist the same bishop throughout her tenure with the Texas COGIC organization, Crouch was eventually appointed National Supervisor in 1995. Mother Bertha Polk, Mother Brooks, and Mother Mackey all assisted Bishop J.E. Alexander.

As time passed, bitter conflicts mounted in the Southeast Texas Jurisdiction between Bishop Ranger and affiliate pastors who presented numerous grievances at the meetings. Ministers were so absorbed in turmoil that the Southeast jurisdiction was without representation in Memphis, although regional superintendents continued to make reports to the national organization. Dissatisfied with conditions as they were, a group of senior men withdrew from Ranger’s district, preferring to ally themselves with Reverend C. H. Nelson until they were certified as a jurisdiction. On April 17, 1963, Texas South

---

20 Ibid.
21 Whole Truth.
22 Ibid. 2.
Central was established with C. H. Nelson presiding as bishop and Mother Eloise Law as state supervisor.\(^{23}\)

With so much unrest in the air, only those who had longstanding blood and friendship ties in the COGIC were willing to ride out the storm. Those who did not usually joined the on-going Latter Rain Movement with its newly forming Charismatic dimension. Although the collective move of black independents was negatively perceived by many in COGIC independents had enough successful examples before them to pursue their respective visions with the zeal and idealism that always animates the young.

The Latter Rain Movement provided them with unprecedented opportunities to literally “let the Lord have his way.” Adherents interpreted “his way” as one so democratic that participants often moved about from church to church without ever pledging loyalty to any congregation. The pulpit was equally democratized as worshippers, purportedly led by the spirit, shared “whatever the Lord put on their hearts.” Determined to do away with “Big I’s” and “Little you’s,” in some gatherings no one person was officially in charge; all were welcomed to preach, prophecy, and pray for the needs of worshippers. The kind of heterarchy they practiced was reminiscent of Quakerism.

No doubt to those who appreciated structure, such acephalic gatherings appeared to be chaotic, as indeed some were. Yet their attraction to so many people suggested that they provided a much needed occasion for the kind of self-affirmation that traditional church models inhibited. Based on the renewed interest in faith among whites of the 1950s, the wave of experiential religious gatherings announced a move away from the

---

\(^{23}\) Upon Bishop Nelson’s death, N.H. Henderson was appointed bishop. Mother Law has served with this Jurisdiction for more than 32 years. Laws Memorial Church of God in Christ is named after Mother Eloise Law’s late husband, a prominent COGIC church founder.

Interestingly enough, Bishop Henderson’s wife Emma Henderson was Barbara Kossie’s best friend when the two were students at Phyllis Wheatley. Barbara was always impressed with Emma’s kind demeanor. In later years, she learned that Emma’s comportment was a reflection of her upbringing. She was from a devout Pentecostal family.
early-twentieth-century insistence on logic and structure. Like it or not, the move was on in the bayou city. Even while precious little could obstruct the tide, charismatics provided an organized framework for “letting the spirit flow.”

**The Charismatic Movement:**

Beyond the world of black Pentecostals in Texas, a new religious experience in California began to gain national attention. Reminiscent of the Azusa Revival of 1906, the Charismatic Movement was born April 3, 1960, when Father Dennis Bennet of St. Mark’s Episcopal parish in Van Nuys, California, announced to his congregation that he had received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of “speaking in unknown tongues.” Initially, the Pentecostal explosion within mainline churches was referred to as the neo-Pentecostal movement or the “New Pentecostalism.” Yet many objected to the neo-Pentecostal label, preferring the expression “charismatic renewal,” one term which precluded their being labeled as Pentecostal. While some Christians within mainline churches who experienced glossalalia (tongues) referred to it as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, others believed it to be but one evidence of Spirit baptism, not the only evidence. Still others opined that speaking in tongues was a spiritual gift but not a second baptism or evidence of Spirit baptism. The different interpretations notwithstanding, all acknowledged that spiritual renewal was indeed flourishing, i.e., that Christians were experienced “charismata,” God’s restored gifts to the church.

Because the charismatic movement was so widespread and touched not only every major Protestant denomination but Roman Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox Church as well, it has been difficult to discuss schematically. Despite the complexity inherent in a

---

24 It should be noted that East coast evangelist David Wilkerson had established a national reputation with efforts in inner-city New York. His ministry catalyzed a national religious trend to spread the gospel to urban youths. Present-day Teen Challenge which Wilkerson founded is one such outreach program that has experienced phenomenal success.


movement involving such diversity, Michael Moriality argues that each variation shared
the following common elements and distinguishing characteristics: \(^{27}\)

1. *Experiencing Jesus.* One of the trademarks of the charismatic movement is a
personal encounter with Jesus Christ. A focus on Christ put one in the position to
receive baptism of the Spirit, which resulted in a deeper reverence for Jesus, a greater
submission to his will, and the ability not just to serve him as Savior but also as lord. The
proclamation “Jesus is Lord” has become a favorite slogan among charismatics. All of
the following distinctive characteristics of the movement are available only to those who
have personally encountered Christ and have been baptized by his Spirit.

2. *Power.* The baptism of the Spirit brought spiritual power necessary for godly
living, maintaining a powerful witness, obeying God’s Word, and all the elements having
to do with serving others. All Spirit-empowered ministries manifested supernatural
influences, which brought greater enlightenment and enthusiasm. Spiritual power
produced a stronger witness for Christ, which resulted in more people getting saved.\(^{28}\)

3. *Worship.* The first blessing of Spirit baptism was the ability to praise the Lord
from one’s “innermost being” (Jn 7:38). The Spirit-baptized Christian has been lifted to
a higher dimension in worship, having been gifted with a new capacity to praise God.
True worship brings one into the presence of God, where new songs burst forth and
spiritual gifts flow freely.

4. *Prayer.* According to charismatics, all who have the special endowment of
power from on high through the baptism of the Holy Spirit acquire a strong, fearless, and
insistent spirit to engage in successful prayer. Many stressed “praying in the spirit,”
which is interpreted to mean “praying in unknown tongues.” By “praying in the spirit”
you are praying a perfect prayer since the Holy Spirit in inspiring the utterance. This
type of devotional praying solicits a greater response from God.

\(^{27}\)Ibid., 71-73.
5. *Sign gifts.* The charismatic movement was most widely known for its strong conviction that all the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8—10 are meant for the church today. The most prominent gifts are those exercised most often were speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy. What was new among certain mainline churches that did not practice these gifts was their growing acceptance of the validity and availability of these gifts for the purpose of revitalizing and strengthening the churches’ mission. As the mainline churches progressively opened themselves to charismata, the streams of the charismatic movement continued to broaden and deeper.

6. *New revelations.* At the heart of the charismatic movement was the belief that anyone baptized in the Holy Spirit can hear the voice of God. The conviction that God speaks as directly and as regularly today as he did in the first century is the hallmark of charismatic theology. A Christian who knows God intimately should expect to hear from God personally and can be confident in saying, “God told me.” While many Christians have claimed statements such as these are based on noncognitive, subject urges, charismatics simply retort, “If it happened in the Bible, it can happen today: if the apostle Paul heard from God, so can I.”

7. *The Word.* Charismatics claim to be “Word people,” purveyors of the “full Gospel.” They have little tolerance for those who peddle academic philosophies they cannot find in the Scriptures. Charismatics have been consistently criticized for their subjective method of interpreting the Bible and their arbitrary allegorization of certain teachings, but they reason that for one to know the deeper truths of the Scriptures the Holy Spirit must reveal it directly. Nevertheless, charismatics are generally Bible-carriers and constantly emphasizing the importance of the Scriptures.

8. *Demonic activity.* Charismatics claim that the baptism of the Holy Spirit brings one into a new dimension of spiritual realities. The Spirit-baptized believer becomes more aware of the reality of Satan and the powers of darkness. This awareness has given deliverance and exorcism new relevance in mainline churches experiencing charismata.
9. *Apocalyptic.* The advent of the charismatic movement was generally followed by an increased expectancy of Jesus's return. Not all accepted Pentecostalism's doctrine of the pretribulation Rapture,²⁹ but most charismatics sensed that history was moving toward its climax, with the return of Christ just over the horizon.

10. *Evangelism.* The baptism of the Spirit brought greater power for effective evangelism. Just as Spirit-baptized believers have a new ability to worship, pray, exercise spiritual gifts, and hear from God, so they have a new ability and zeal to share the Gospel with unbelievers. Charismatics claim that in order for one to have many converts, he or she needs to be baptized in the Spirit.

During the Charismatic movement, some charismatics considered the following groups to be extreme in their claims: Manifested Sons of God; The Sheperding Movement; and The Positive Confession Movement. According to Moriality, the most militant movement to rise up alongside the charismatic movements was the Manifested Sons of God, which developed out of the Latter Rain movement in the early 1950s under the leadership of John Robert Stevens, but thrived during the 1960s and 1970s. The Manifested Sons of God was a small movement and could be described as a loose federation of local churches all serving under the “apostleship” of Stevens, who guided the movement from its headquarters in Washington, Iowa. Stevens relocated to South Gate, California, in 1954, “after having a vision which he said was comparable to Paul’s conversion experience on the Damascus Road.”³⁰ Stevens founded the Church of the Living Word, better known as “The Walk,” which gave birth to twenty-six sister churches in California, fifty-one in other parts of the United States, and twenty-two in foreign countries. Stevens wielded unquestionable authority over one hundred churches.

Moriaity argued that Stevens was heavily influenced by William Branham. As a result of Stevens' teachings, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

---

²⁹ The Pentecostal belief in the Rapture is based on () in which the suggests that believers would make a grand spiritual exodus from the earth before the tribulation period discussed in Revelation.

denomination revoked his ordination certificate in 1949. In April 1951 the Assemblies of God also requested that he disassociate himself from their churches.\textsuperscript{31} Manifested Sons churches were marked by rigid authoritarian structures where followers gave a mindless allegiance to a leader's teaching. The emphasis on "new levels of revelation" led to an easy manipulation of the Scriptures that passed undetected since the people neglected to think through what they were being taught.

Stevens and the more radical wing of the Manifested Sons taught three doctrines, all rooted in the belief that man could become divine. They taught that a human being can become God, that a person can become perfect, and that he or she can become Christ. The movement eventually disbanded as a result of many scandals, doctrinal excesses, power abuses, and bizarre practices, which earned them a cult-like treatment in the headlines of orthodox Christianity. The dissipation of the Manifested Sons did not result in an abolition of their teachings, only in a transference of them.\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to the Manifested Sons movement, the Sheperding Movement also sprang up during the charismatic renewal. It too grew out of the Latter Rain/charismatic tradition and attained its greatest influence during the 1960s and 1970s. An independent charismatic force, the Sheperding Movement arose out of a deep concern for effective discipleship and spiritual accountability. All Christians must be shepherded and thus subject to kingdom authority.\textsuperscript{33}

The movement originated from the ministry of five teachers out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida—Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Derek Prince, Don Basham, and Ern Baxter (a William Branham disciple). They taught a pyramid form of church government that placed the members of the congregation at the base of the church; above them on the pyramid were the house-group leaders, who were to oversee the church

\textsuperscript{32} Morarity, 76.
members to ensure that each is discipled properly; next in order were the elders, who held the house-group leaders accountable with regard to both their own lives and the lives of those under their authority; then the pastors, who held the elders accountable; and at the top was the apostle or apostles, who were accountable to one another. The rising levels of authority in pyramid form were designed to restore the church to its New Testament structure.

To ensure that shepherding was adequately implemented, a “covering” was needed to protect and direct every member in the congregation. Covering means that “a church member must have any important decision, and sometimes less important ones, ‘covered’ or approved by their house-group leader, elder or pastor." The shepherds enforcing the covering concept often ruled over their disciples to such an extent that decisions such as employment, vacation time, appointments with professionals (doctor, lawyer, etc.) marriage, and even how often a husband and wife could have sex could not be made without the shepherd’s approval." The Shepherding movement caused a deep split within charismatic circles because of the strict control many shepherds exercised over their members.

The Charismatic movement attracted a growing number of formally educated African Americans worshippers who appreciated the pedagogical approach to ministry that many of the famed charismatics exercised. Neatly organized, formulaic teaching was one of its hallmarks. The titles of many of the works published during this period illustrate the point.

**The Positive Confession Movement:**

Certain Charismatics also became avid supporters of the “Positive Confession Movement.” According to L. Lovett, the phrase “positive confession” is an “alternative title for the faith-formula theology or the prosperity doctrine promulgated by several

---

35 Moriatery, 76.
contemporary televangelists under the leadership and inspiration of Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948)." Most who espouse the doctrine of "positive confession" believe in "bringing into existence what we state with our mouth, since faith is a confession." Kenyon’s followers in their "relatively new biblical-theological emphasis, regarded the value of the power of the songue as a key to the confession theory". After Kenyon’s death in 1948, his message was rearticulated in several “word ministries,” including those of such personalities as Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Capps, Frederick K. C. Price, and others.


**Effect on AAIPs:**

The excitement of the Charismatic Movement notwithstanding, it appeared to many AAIP pastors felt that their most influential members were being lured away by

---

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 719.
41 Ibid., 258.
42 Ibid., 256.
star preachers and mega-ministries with which they could not compete. With the growing emphasis on faith and materialism, independent pastors of small congregations found themselves under fire. Having spent years working with their members, praying for them on a moments notice, visiting them and their loves ones in the hospital, paying rent, and buying Christmas gifts for their sometimes fatherless children, they found it difficult to understand how readily and enthusiastically their members responded to white leadership.\textsuperscript{43}

An old African American saying communicated the degree to which blacks still suffered from the psychological trauma induced by years of oppression and disfranchisement; the problem was difficult to solve but easily diagnosed—“the white man’s ice was colder, and his sugar was sweeter.” Caught up in the legacy of race, many blacks had not thought about the sheer numerical implications of the term “minority.” Generally speaking, because whites out-numbered blacks, whatever whites accomplished appeared bigger and better. Mesmerized by the supposed facility with which the latter established churches and mega-ministries, many black pastors felt that few blacks took the time to distinguish the power of numbers from the power of God. Black pastors would simply have to bide their time, and wait “until the children grew legs.”\textsuperscript{44}

Although many AAIPC pastors who feared the loss of more young black lives to crime and a deepening of racial divides did not agree with the militant stance of the Black Panther party and other activist organizations, the Black Power movement with its emphasis on black beauty and self-love contained at least a portion of the remedy. Regardless of the faith black Houstonians professed, none could honestly claim that having escaped the residual pains of racism and the phantoms of inferiority that haunted African Americans as they strove to improve their lot. The very fact that moving out or away from an indigenous black community was equated with prosperity and upward

\textsuperscript{43} One black pastor in Houston purportedly lost his entire congregation to a popular local white pastor. 
\textsuperscript{44} According to Kossie, he was apprised of the psychological state of many AAIP-C adherents via a dream in which he was told that his ministry would not experience growth to the fullest until his members’ corporate faith matured.
social mobility among many African American Houstonians suggested as much. With class, race, and generational issues inextricably intertwined, many blacks Houstonians, like the black community at large, were caught in a psychological double-bind. Whereas they were encouraged to take advantage of new opportunities, those who did so were sometimes accused of denying their heritage or of “acting white,” a misconception that dangerously suggested that being black and poor were interconnected states of existence. Yet those blacks who remained in predominantly black communities and committed themselves to the spiritual and social empowerment of black youths were sometimes labeled “non-progressive.” All of this combined with the attraction of younger generations to newer subdivisions in the far Northeast, Southern, and Southwestern parts of the city proved to be a great challenge to many black pastors who continued to serve in predominantly black communities. Such was the case with Kossie.

Travelin’ Shoes, Lord:

With so many new Pentecostal/Charismatic possibilities to choose from, many spirit-filled Christians floated from church to church, hesitating to “join” any one of them officially. Among the travelers, nonetheless, were those who really sought a place to lay their heads. Only time would distinguish “surfers” from “seekers.” Although Kossie had pastored a series of storefront churches prior to settling in the historic Lyons Theater, historical evidence suggests that he and his congregation were indeed seekers.

After their trying experience in Humble, Texas, Kossie and his wife worshipped briefly at the “Miracle House of Prayer,” an AAIP church, from 1961-62. At the same time, they had begun to conduct prayer meetings in their home.45 Because Kossie did not have a building, however, he attended Sunday serves at the Miracle House of Prayer

---

45 During that time, cottage prayer meetings were quite popular. For example, Kossie and his wife also joined an unnamed sister in her home in Acreage Home to conduct prayer meetings. Sometimes Kossie would minister and pray for the needs of the people. As the gathering began to grow, political problems again surfaced. One of the sisters in attendance wanted to build a church on her property, but did not want to put the edifice in the name of the church.
while continuing to have cottage prayer meetings in his house. A few months after their arrival, Kossie was invited to be the assistant pastor of the church.

Determined to find a more permanent place of worship, in 1962 Kossie eventually rented a theater in Denver Harbor, a predominantly Hispanic community, naming the church “Harvest Time Revival Center,” an AAIP congregation. However, this time a new set of factors stifled church progress. Feeling culturally disconnected from the area, those who accompanied Kossie wanted more familiar surroundings to establish their young church. There sentiments were deepened when thieves broke into the church and stole all of the equipment, accouterment that members lacked the finances to replace.

After only a few months in Denver Harbor, Kossie and his congregation then rented a church on New Orleans Street. “Harvest Time” attracted about thirty attendants each time the doors were open. Once the congregation started to grow, the woman who had inherited the church and other properties from a deceased brother decided that she wanted the edifice to herself.46

The members of “Harvest Time” then packed up their praises and headed for Green and Meadow Streets in Houston’s Fifth Ward area where they remained from 1964-68. It was here that a foundation for growth would be established. Reinforcing the idea that Houston was an immigrant city, many of the founding members of “Harvest Time” had moved to Houston from areas throughout the South and Southwest: Mother Josephine Sanders (Tyler and Navasota, Texas); Mother Mamie Woods and her sister, Mother Maggie Johnson; Mother Jerline Satcherwhite (Pinebluff, Arkansas) and her children and in laws; Herbert and Helen Satcherwhite (Arkansas); Mozelle Satcherwhite (Louisiana); and Dallas and Laura Wilson (Louisiana and Arkansas). Among teachers, ministers, and leaders involved were Charlie C. and Johnnie Mae Driver (Alabama and Cleveland, Texas); 47 Prentice and Gladys Hobbs; Brother Johnnie Brooks (Oklahoma);

46 Barbara Kossie continued: “Many of our people back then did not really know how to manage property. Those who were smart gained. Those who didn’t lost a lot.”
47 Charlie C. and Johnnie Mae Driver sought Kossie out after seeing him at one of A.A. Allen’s many tent revivals; that particular night, as Johnnie Mae Driver remembers, Kossie was sporting a checkered coat.
and Elder Earl Thomas along with his wife and seven children. Supportive families included Sister Dorothy Johnson (Grapeland, Texas) who lived next door to the church; her sisters Melba and Lee (Grapeland, Texas); the DeBose’s; the Banion’s (they had one son who played the guitar and three daughters); the Bank’s and their five children. Sister Banks’s sister and her two children also came. As Barbara Kossie recalls, “When the Banions came in [in extended family fashion], they filled a lot of seats.” Harvest Time also had “a good little number and had people who would come from the Kelly Courts,” one of the city’s answers to the housing shortage affecting Houston’s growing black community. Among Kelly Courts residents were Sister Washington and Brother James Bedford, the church organist. Unlike Kossie’s experience in Humble, Texas, this time the church included members from his immediate family: his nine children, his younger sister, Wilma Jean Kossie, and his sister-in-law, Lucinda Kossie, who launched a lifetime career as the church pianist. Thanks to “a spirit of cooperation” among members, the congregation bonded and generally had “a high time in the Lord,” seniors citizens, young adults, children and all.

During their stay on Green and Meadows, members even found the time participate in evangelistic work in Cleveland, Texas, approximately forty miles northeast of Houston. Kossie was particularly attracted to Cleveland because Charlie C. and Johnnie Mae had been driving all the way to Houston to attend services on Green and Meadows. In an effort to establish a church in the small town, Harvest Time sponsored a revival there. As ministers had hoped, a church began to emerge from the meeting. For the next four years (1964-68) Kossie and some of his younger members journeyed to Cleveland on Sunday nights to worship with those in attendance. “God did some mighty things during those years,” Kossie remembers. While Sunday services were held in a box car, revivals were conducted under a tent in the middle of a wooded area. There the saints

“There was just something about him that drew us to him. We just knew that we wanted to fellowship with him.” Since their meeting, the two families have been further joined by the marriage of Rufus Ronnie Driver (the eldest son of the Drivers’s fourteen siblings) to Simmie Louise Kossie (the fourth of child of the Kossie’s nine). Simmie and Ronnie have been wedded for twenty years.
worshipped upon the sawdust-covered ground and filled the tent with their shouting and stentorian singing. Mozelle Satcherwhite, Betty Samuels, her sister Helen, and many others worshipping under the tent still remember vivid moments of “hot services” in which joyful melodies of victory and deliverance rang out into the starlit night. From time to time policemen would come to remind congregants to tone down their praises only to be transfixed by what they witnessed. Despite the “great spiritual outpouring” that gatherers experienced, Kossie found it difficult to manage two churches and a family. He then turned the ministry over to Charlie C. Driver, who re-established the Cleveland church as “C.C. Driver Revivals.”

Kossie was so excited by the developments that he envisioned “going out on the field” to evangelize as young independent ministers were often encouraged to do. When he spoke to his former pastor Bishop J.L. Parker about his plans, Parker cautionsed him, “Son, God ain’t calling you too far with all those children.” Largely sobered, but still determined to “do a work for the Lord,” Kossie then decided to minister full-time, but without his wife’s approval. Kossie recalls:

I was so zealous that I quit the job that the Lord had given me. I’d saved up some money to do so. But with each month, that pile got smaller and smaller. [Kossie gesticulates with his hands.] Just as I was gettin’ down to my last, I went into my study and prayed, desperate to hear from the Lord. While I was still prayin’, Viki Diane yelled, ‘Daddy, telephone.’ When I got to the phone, a manager from a company that I had once worked for said, ‘Roy, you know where I can find a good beef boner.’ ‘You talkin’ to one,’ I said. [He laughs.] You see, I had gotten ahead of God. He did intend for me to go into full-time ministry, but not then.

According to his wife’s recollection, “things got pretty tight...Gerald was my baby then,” she says, marking time as she often does with the births of her children.

Normally, whenever I had a baby, there was always a celebration. Roy would always buy me something new—a living room suit, draperies, you name it. But this time things were different...times were hard.
Yet Roy’s having found new employment suggested that matters would soon improve. Although he never discovered another job that paid him as well as the one he had previously quit in the name of ministry, he contented himself to work two, sometimes three, jobs to make up the difference.

The arrival of Barbara’s new white French Provincial bedroom suit to celebrate the birth of their eighth child in 1963 suggested that Roy’s hard work had paid off. Family photographs of her grinning in various poses and places suggested the Kossies were in a happier mood. A family trip to Six Flags Over Texas in Dallas further suggested money and time for leisure. The Kossie children who were old enough to go still remember the surprised looks they received as they marched, skipped, or jumped from one ride to the next. “Here we were this big black family having a good time at an amusement park, one that you had to pay to get into. I know Moma and Daddy must have been proud.” Viki Diane, their oldest remembers.

The arrival of Kimberly Rose (1966) two and a half years later coupled with the family’s move to Scenic Woods in northeast Houston affirmed the continuation of prosperous times. The Kossie children were fascinated by their new “Leave-It-to-Beaver” house and surroundings. Their story-and-a-half “mansion,” according to their estimation, contained four bedrooms, two full baths, central heat and air, sliding glass patio doors, a den, a utility porch, and a two-car garage. The stairs, of course, were their favorite feature, and would remain so for subsequent generations of tikes and toddlers. Moreover, a huge park equipped with a tennis court, baseball field, and basketball court was directly across the street. When the Kossies did not wish to play at the park, they still had access to a lot that their father eventually purchased with expansion in mind. Indeed, if their surroundings were any indication, the Kossies had moved into the American middle-class safe and sound.49

48 Karen Kossie (born August 17, 1963, St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for “Negroes”).
49 It is interesting to note that E.W. Wilcotts and Kossie had their eyes on the same house, a fact which the two discovered after informing each other of a “nice house in Scenic Woods” that each was hoping to buy. Wilcotts eventually settled in the historic Heights district.
Meanwhile, the church building on Green and Meadows had begun to leak. Because the edifice needed extensive renovations, Kossie moved his congregation to Caplin Street where they remained for a short period of time. By this time, however, the church had begun to pay on the Lyons Theater. Concerned that they were wasting precious funds by paying rent while they purchased, Mother Mamie Woods advised that the congregation “go ahead and move into [their] building and work on it gradually.” With the help of a few brothers, Kossie “began to try get the building in order just enough for us to move in... It hurts to remember,” Sister Kossie continues. “I think about all the sacrifices he had to make. All the hours he spent in that building way into the night. And when Brother Johnnie McGowen and Brother Henry Satcherwhite went to Cleveland,\textsuperscript{50} that only left Brother DeBose who was ill, and Brother James Bedford, who was just a young man starting out with his family. Sometimes some other brother would go give him a hand here and there. Elder Earl Thomas, for example, helped him from time to time.”\textsuperscript{51}

Kossie’s and his membership's gradual settling did not necessarily mean that matters were resolved, especially given that the Fifth Ward was in transition. Reflecting the complexities associated with the demographic changes and local developments, Kossie and his church were caught in the middle of a cross-current. When he established his church in the Lyons Theater in Fifth Ward, one of the two theaters constructed for black audiences in Houston, he walked into an area that was quickly becoming urban graveyard. Whether or not the dry bones of the community could live again, only time would tell.

\textsuperscript{50} Johnnie McGowen and Henry Satcherwhite were related to the Charlie C. and Johnnie Mae Driver. Onzella, Henry’s wife, is Charlie C. Driver’s sister. Johnnie McGowen is Johnnie Mae’s brother.
Wheatley High School had just witnessed the departure of many of its brightest black youths. They were among the first to enjoy the social and educational opportunities newly afforded them via integration. Mickey Leeland, a resident of Fifth Ward’s French Town (congressman), Barbara Jordan (the first black Congresswoman in the United States), Ruth Smith (president of Smith College); and James Douglas, (President of Texas Southern University) represented the cream of the Fifth Ward crop. Their departure was symptomatic of a mass exodus out of the community.

Beyond the purview of Kossie’s spiritual mission, definite factors combined to precipitated the Fifth Ward’s eventual decline: a rising crime rate due to an influx of drugs and violence in the area; upward social mobility among the Fifth Ward elite; and the construction of major thoroughfares that divided the community.

Starting in the 1940s, Houston’s developers constructed two major highways (now called Interstate 10 and Highway 59) through the 40,000-person neighborhood, an act which paralyzed the economic vitality of the community. Joe Feagin argues that “[t]hese two freeway systems literally crucified the area by creating large freeways in a cross pattern through its heart. This massive cross disrupted community life during and after construction and permanently destroyed many black homes and businesses; the roads also separated many residents from convenient access to other business and church facilities. The initial decisions leading to destruction of this residential community were made by white leaders in the interest of business-oriented growth.”

In addition to the negative demographic and physical changes, Kossie also faced another challenge. Not only was his church located between two famous-turned-notorious night clubs, the Black Cat and Briscos, but it also endured the problems associated with the prevalence of prostitution and the influx of drugs into the area. Many

---

people were simply afraid to worship at Latter Day because occasional guns shots from
the nearby clubs and the frequent scream of sirens often startled saints out of their high
praises. Men and women, inebriated or high on drugs often entered the sanctuary to
"participate" or to fall sleep, depending on the portion of the service they caught and on
how much substance they had abused. Some attended so regularly that they acquired
affectionate nicknames reflecting their comportment.

Attending was also considered too risky for some in that visitors and members
frequently had their cars vandalized or stolen, or were approached by vagrants soliciting
handouts. In addition, as opportunities for purchasing churches from white
congregations mounted, so did the pressure to take advantage of them. Yet doing so was
not necessarily possible for small Pentecostal congregations. Banks were not willing to
lend money to independent black congregations given that they were not members of
larger and more established denominations. They were even less willing to help if
potential borrowers attempted to undertake projects in designated "high risk" areas.
With no bustling black middle class incomes in prospect, he and his congregation raised
the money otherwise; he took out a loan on his furniture and he and his members sold
barbecue dinners to acquire the remainder. This meant that visible progress was slow but
steady with Kossie doing much of the physical labor himself.

The economic devastation that demographic and structural changes produced so
quickly meant that Kossie was unique in his constant prophetic assertion that the area
would be revitalized. By the time Kossie and his small congregation had purchased the
nearly condemned structure, the national media had already declared the Fifth Ward area a
place of ruin with one of the highest crime rates in the nation. Thus while black
Pentecostals purportedly loved a spiritual challenged, many questioned Kossie’s move
given the circumstances.
The theater/church stood neglected, deserted by time. Full of bittersweet symbolism for Kossie, it had been a childhood hideaway. There he had watched Buck James “shot-em-ups” with his school buddies, avoiding the “singing pictures” unless Barbara wanted to see them. He even remembers throwing a candy bar atop its roof to release “puppy-love” frustration over Barbara’s having rejected his sugary gift. When he extended the candy bar, one obviously loaded with more than peanuts, Barbara recanted in that “dainty-like way she had, ‘I don’t like Baby Ruths; I like Almond Joys.’” His adolescent ego was crushed yet challenged as his Louisiana princess “played hard to get.”

In 1966, some fifteen years later, the memory of better times had faded with the stark reality of poverty, abandonment, and decay. With beauty no where to be found, the building had become a roost for pigeons, a den for rodents of every kin, and a dank shelter for illicit rendez-vous’s and illegal transactions. Kossie leaned back on the heels of dusty boots, taking deep breath as he surveyed the dark building with a flashlight in hand. “It looked like Frankenstein’s den,” he recalls.53 As he walked toward the front of the auditorium, he discovered that the pit in front of the huge rotted screen was inundated with stale, putrid water. “Ancient wine bottles and beer cans floated on top of water that was at least three feet deep.” The stench of mildewed theater seats made the air thick and heavy. Kossie beheld the damp side walls. The water rolling down them glistened as faint streaks of sunlight stole through holes in the roof. According to Kossie, he heard a voice in his spiritual ear:

‘Son, do not look at the condition of this building. I will show forth my glory in this place. These walls will not be able to contain the glory that shall be revealed in this place. For I will send my sons and my daughters from the north, south, east, and west unto this place. You cannot tell your story. I am telling mine.’

---

53 With each year, Kossie’s story becomes more dramatic. Last Sunday, February 15, 1998, he added “Count Dracula” and “the Wolfman” to his list of possible tenants.
Although Kossie accepted his spiritual challenge, for four years he did not let anyone enter the building due to the extensive damage and neglect sustained over the years. Equally as important, Kossie did not want to be dissuaded by the negative comments that had begun to circulate about his congregation’s purchase. Nor did he want to be tempted to flee to more pleasant surroundings. After his workday ended on his secular job, Kossie would go to the church to haul off load after load of trash and debris. This was a very lonely, trying time for him because many of his colleagues thought that he had certainly “missed God,” especially given the opportunities for growth made affordable to black congregations as white pastors fled from newly integrated residential areas with their congregations.

Yet because of his persistence, Kossie became a neighborhood icon among Fifth Ward residence. He gained the respect of many although he did not attempt to translate that respect into political power as was the long-standing tradition among black Baptist pastors in the area. The winos and vagabonds who roamed Lyons Avenue at odd hours knew him well, for he often worked throughout the night in an attempt to restore the edifice. “Say, Noah!” he remembers one passerby yelling to him mockingly. “When you gonna finish your ark?” Kossie laughed through hidden tears.

He recalled, nonetheless, that at his lowest moments, “God would always send someone to encourage him along the way.” On one occasion, for example, a colleague, Bishop H.M. Bolden (Rock of Salvation Holiness Church) came by to see what everyone was talking about. “Kossie, people had me thinking this building was falling down on you. This is a well-built structure. You keep up the good work.” As Kossie continued to pull out rusted pipes and worn sheet rock he received inner celestial reaffirmation about the importance of his undertaking:

---

54 Kossie has repeated this story many times to the congregation. Any Latter Day member who has been active in the church for a period of years would be able to finish any of Kossie’s spiritual narratives with little difficulty.
The Lord kept telling me, "Don't let anyone melt you or pour you out of this area. I am going to show forth my glory in this place. Do not look at the circumstances. This place will be a light house to the community. I will bring the knowledge of it before city fathers."55

Because of the pressure of ministry and the snail's pace at which progress was being made, Kossie became rather reclusive as an act of survival. He focused all of his energy on the renovation of the building, decreasing the number of engagements that he would normally have accepted. His wife reminded him to rest, often to no avail. Suggesting the amount of time that Kossie spend working on the structure, his wife once stated to the congregation, "The church is the other woman," and to him, "You should have been a priest." Yet Barbara was deeply concerned about her husband's well-being:

I'd lay awake at night worried about him. In fact, I couldn't fall asleep at all until I heard him open the door. It was so dangerous in Fifth Ward during those years. I didn't want anything to happen to him...I was so concerned that I began to pray and ask God why he had given my husband such a difficult assignment. But after all of my crying, sobbing, and complaining, the Lord spoke to me just as clearly and said, "You don't love him more than I do." The case was closed.56

Evaluating the situation in retrospect Kossie surmised that "the Lord was teaching him patience, humility, and long-suffering":

Young and zealous, I thought things were going to happen overnight. But they didn't. As Bishop Parker once told me, "Son, sometimes it takes the Lord a long time to move." I grew to understand what the old saints meant when they said, "He may not come when you want him, but he's right on time." In other words, God has an appointed time to accomplish his purpose. And more often than not, our concept of time does not match his. In fact, if the Lord had told me then that I'd have to wait nearly forty years on the fulfillment of his promises, I might have had another mind.

55 The same holds true for this anecdote. Kossie recites it to the congregation on a regular basis. When visitors come, they are also acquainted with his narrative.
Both Kossie and his wife believed they were being taught to surrender their ministry and each other to what they believed to be "the will of God," lessons that were not immediately appreciated by either. Yet they vowed to commit themselves fully to what they deemed to be the plan of God for their lives. Throughout the years, both often repeated the vision to the congregation, realizing that the fulfillment thereof was not left to them alone, for afterall, as Kossie often affirmed, "God was telling His story."
Chapter 8: 1970s: Saints in Transition

“One day when I was working in the building, a white preacher entered and said to me, ‘Son, God says you’re not behind. But you will have to wait until the children grow legs.’” (1971)

Pastor Roy Lee Kossie, Jr.

“Get out of the ghetto and get ‘mo!” (1973)¹

Frederick J. Eikenkoetter II—Reverend Ike

In the 1970s, the post-civil rights AAIPC church of the Southwest of the 1970s was decidedly more complex than its predecessor. The on-going struggle for identity and place emanating from the African Americans inherent cultural duality and underscored by the Black Power Movement did not impede the progress that thousands of African Americans experienced as the fruits of the civil rights Movement and Johnsonian Affirmative action programs multiplied. The gradual dissolution of social boundaries reinforced by new educational and professional opportunities for blacks throughout the region and nation led to socio-economic diversification and racial integration among AAIPCs at every level. Further reflecting the times, eight concurrent developments reshaped and even the AAIPC theosphere: (1) black migration took a dramatic shift southward for the first time in American history; (2) the African American spiritual cosmos experienced notable expansion; (3) the number of women ministers increased; (4) the AAIPC community in Houston and throughout the Southwest witnessed a gradual fusion of capitalism and Christianity in Houston; (5) the Charismatic movement in Houston mushroomed; (6) Houston’s religious community experienced the birth of the “Bapticosts”; (7) it witnessed continued interest in mainline Pentecostal approaches and worship modalities; and (8) it experienced the advent of “contemporary” gospel music.

In the aftermath of the turbulent 1960s, a period still charged with bitterness and disappointment over the elusive quality of the American dream, AAIPCs of the 1970s,

along with traditional denominations, found themselves struggling to maintain relevance in the eyes of an increasingly skeptical African American populous. The spiritual climate seemed so bleak that scholar Joseph Washington feared black religion would be discarded as a survival tool when blacks no longer felt the need for the emotional reinforcement that it had provided them throughout the twentieth century. Indicative of the changing times, black students retreated from religious studies programs. The largest traditional black denominations, the most middle-class of all black churches had no incentive for ecumenism. Moreover, middle-class blacks, who did not see “Pentecostal or other fundamentalist groups as bastions of security of islands of peace” were “actually ashamed of lower-class blacks who engaged in mass evangelism and media hustling.” Washington contended that “[m]iddle-class blacks were essentially “apprehensive lest through such activities they be pulled back down to the level from which they so recently emerged.”

Beyond the aversion that black youth of the 1970s had to their forefathers’ religions, few were prepared to deal with the psychic insecurity that integration ironically produced. As African Americans from the northeast, midwest, and southwest initiated a “third wave” of African American migration southward and westward, the geographical, cultural, linguistic, and artistic boundaries of “blackness” were being redefined at an alarming pace, with the negative influences of racism somehow figuring into every definition. Moreover, as blacks moved out of stereotypical spaces, so did whites. As many blacks distanced themselves from their cultural past, they discovered that a growing number of whites were eager to claim abandoned territory. Thus the academic battles raged over who owned jazz, rock-and-roll, gospel music and any number of popular cultural icons and expressions.

---

With so much instability in the air, many African Americans, dubious that Christianity held the answer to the spiritual and moral dilemmas of black community—particularly its youth—dismissed faith altogether. Others embraced neo-African and Afro-Caribbean religions. Still others seeking spiritual alternatives converted to Islam.\(^3\) (Experimentation with Eastern Religions and the growth of home-grown entertainment-based religions happens later, i.e., Buddhism, hip-hop, Jamaican Rastafarianism). In short, pithy phrases like “try Jesus” seemed not only simple but antiquated.

Yet others realized as had J. Saunders Redding twenty years earlier, that “leav[ing] God out of consideration” was hardly possible.\(^4\) For “...God had been made to play a very conspicuous part in race relations in America. At one time or another, and often at the same time, He ha[d] been a protagonist for both sides. He ha[d] damned and blessed first one side and then the other with truly godlike impartiality.” So those who were not ready to toss away Christianity completely, thus, set out to restructure and redirect the aims of the black church. James Cone, father of liberationist black theology, provided an ideological framework for their concerns.

A product of the civil rights movement, a considered to be a radical at the time, Cone argued that “[i]n a society where persons are oppressed because they are black, Christian theology must become black theology, a theology that is unreservedly identified with the goals of the oppressed and seeks to interpret the divine character of their struggle for liberation. According to Cone, “Black theology” was “particularly appropriate for contemporary America because of its symbolic power to convey both what whites mean by oppression and what blacks mean by liberation.”\(^5\) Cone was “convinced that the patterns of meaning centered in the idea of black theology” were “by no means restricted to the American scene, for blackness symbolize[d] oppression and liberation in any


society. He even boldly warned his readers that his book was written "primarily for the black community, not for whites."\(^6\) Cone's race-conscious position led more conservative African American religious leaders oppose his views. Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, then president of 6.3-million member The National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated, condemned Cone's theology as racist in a paper delivered at the denomination's annual convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Describing black theology as "a gospel of blacks against whites,"\(^7\) Jackson further argued that it "polarized races, promoted segregation, and could negate civil-rights progress."\(^8\)

Although the first generation of AAIPC pastors whose spiritual efforts predated the 1970s agreed intrinsically with Dr. Jackson's conservative assessment, younger black Pentecostal pastors discovered elements of truth in the greater implications of Cone's writings. Children of the Black Power movement, they supported Cone's argument that the black experience was indeed a critical source of theology. The degree to which many had been influenced by his writings becomes more evident as young AAIPC ministers of the 1980s and 1990s took their places among clerics and scholars. Despite a willingness among Pentecostal youth to entertain Cone's black theology, African American Pentecostals of the 1970s still remained thrice removed from America's religious center. They were marginalized not only because they were black and Pentecostal, but also because they bore the out-dated stigma associated with "rural/southern" identity, e.g., cultural backwardness; ignorance; naiveté, etc.\(^9\)

\(^6\)Ibid.
\(^7\) Cited in Christianity Today, 16: 51—52, October 8, 1971.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Research shows, however, that the exclusion of the Pentecostal world view from black and white academic circles, coupled with the skepticism black Pentecostals expressed toward educational institutions that refused to legitimize their ecclesial/theological premise all indirectly aided the preservation of African forms of religious expression that mainline denominations had long dismissed as residue from a magico-religious African past, the same residual elements that late twentieth-century scholar Sterling Stuckey appreciates in his work. Pentecostal modes of worship were not theoretically embraced by acculturated blacks of mainstream denominations until the tenets of the Black Power movement (including Afros and Dishekis) encouraged the search for African authenticity and cultural retention. Then and only did members of the African American intelligentsia begin to value the African American Pentecostal-Charismatic experience. Prior to that juncture, Pentecostal-Charismatics were pitied as poverty-stricken illiterates in search of escapism and illusions of power. As the Civil Rights movement and Affirmative Action programs
Yet the sanctified and fire-baptized of Houston in the 1970s were generally in high spirits. Traditional black Pentecostal groups, including the Church of God In Christ (COGIC), the Church of God, and African Americans of the Latter Rain Movement witnessed the arrival of at least two new and distinct brands of young saints. The first group consisted of entrepreneurial, degree-toting children of a reserved temperament who sought to rid themselves of resistant stereotypes of poverty, ignorance, and otherworldliness. The other was comprised of high-spirited co-beneficiaries of the civil rights movement who set out to proved that one could “shout” and “speak in tongues” with their advanced degrees in hand. This latter group aimed to suggest that education and Pentecostal spirituality were hardly diametrically opposed, but rather complementary to each other.

Having long believed themselves “spiritually deeper” than their mainline brothers and sisters, the acquisition of educational skills and training equipped them to give the devil not one black eye, but two. A growing number of young Pentecostals emerged from these new and exciting times. They constituted the first to grant the Pentecostal movement scholarly interpretations that did not name them spiritually dysfunctional and culturally deprived in their premises. James S. Tinney was among them.\textsuperscript{10} He published an article dedicated to William J. Seymour’s legacy\textsuperscript{11} and challenged notions that Pentecostals were apolitical in his doctoral thesis (1978).\textsuperscript{12} Meanwhile theologians noted that despite the misgivings of traditionalists, the collective Pentecostal church was becoming the fastest growing among post-civil rights African Americans. Its insistence on Power, albeit first and foremost Holy-Ghost power, matched the battle cry of the times.

\textsuperscript{10} The late James Tinney was excommunicated from the Church of God in Christ for speaking openly asking the organization to review its position on homosexuality.


The democratization and appreciation for individuality in religious expression that framed its core provided an expansive avenue through which to expend the energy and zeal gained during the civil rights, Black Power, and women’s movements.

The general educational and economic gains experienced by post-Civil Rights African Americans were most visible among members of COGIC. Improved opportunities for blacks and the Most Reverend J.O. Patterson produced the “best of times” for members of the COGIC. The son-in-law to founder Bishop Mason, credited with transforming the church into a modern organization, Patterson proudly stated at the 1975 convention: “God has brought us to a position of prominence. We rightfully take our places...We boast of our numerical strength as the largest Pentecostal group in the world. God has blessed us to ride in the best automobiles, live in the best homes, wear the finest minks and exclusive clothing, and to have large bank accounts. Our churches are no longer confined to storefronts, but we are building cathedrals.”

An urban-oriented organization, in the 1970s COGIC’s largest state memberships were located in California, Texas, New York, and the Midwest as opposed to the South. During the same decade, the organization constructed the $1.7 million-dollar administration building for its C.H. Mason Theological Seminary, an accredited component of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta and the first graduate-level Pentecostal seminary in the United States.

Despite the positive strides nationally, according to Earline Allen, there was certain trouble in COGIC camps, particularly in Bishop Ranger’s Texas Southeast No# 1, Houston, Texas. Rather dictatorial in his posture, Ranger forbade ministers in his jurisdiction to visit other Bishop’s convocations or meetings held in the City of Houston.

---

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Earline Allen, Birth of a Jurisdiction: Texas South East No. 1: Church of God in Christ Southeast, Houston, 1995, 2-4.
Finally pastors, elders, and officials resolved that they could no longer work under threats and other unfavorable conditions. Consequently, they sent a list of the grievances and petition to Bishop Ranger, all of which were ignored. In July 1970 the elders continued to request that their grievances be heard, but Ranger was unyielding. On November 22, 1971, Rev. R. E. Woodard, pastor of Compton Memorial, Galveston, Texas, and Williams Temple in Houston, Texas sent a letter to the pastors announcing that he could no be loyal to the present bishop.¹⁸

Matters grew so contentious that Rev. C. J. Nelson and more than fifty-five pastors withdrew from the state jurisdiction altogether. Rev. Woodard held two meetings with defecting elders Wednesday, December 1, 1971 at 10:00 A.M. and 7:30 P.M.¹⁹ In the document he stated that he spoke on behalf of Chairman N. Godfrey, Superintendent A. J. Hines, Superintendent C. V. Perry and Superintendent B.E. Allen, and other brothers who had been loyal to both Ranger and the state. Those attending the meeting resolved to function in the future as a “Fellowship” of churches.

In January 1972, a union revival was held at the North Main Church of God in Christ where Rev. N. Godfrey pastored. The following month, February 5, 1972, a communication was sent to Bishop Ranger from the National Church to cease all activities as a Bishop of Texas Southeast.²⁰ Ranger ignored the mandate and continued to hold meetings. So did those who broke ties with his district. On March 7, 1972, 10:00 A.M., Bishop Woodard and his allies held a successful meeting at Barnett’s Chapel in Port Arthur, Texas.

Ranger was later infuriated by a letter from Bishop J. O. Patterson, presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ International and General Board Members, urging him to refrain from having jurisdiction over Southeast Texas. Consequently, July 14, 1972, Ranger filed a suit in the 127th Jurisdictional District of Harris County, requesting

¹⁹ Earline Allen, Minutes of Meeting, Wednesday, December 1, 1971.
that Texas to rescind the actions taken by the Bishop Patterson and board members. Ranger further ignored a letter from the General Board dated May 1, 1972 advising him to cease all operation as a presiding bishop in the Churches of God in Christ Southeast. Determined to function as he pleased, Ranger continued to hold convocations, Y.P.W.W. congresses, Sunday School conventions, and meetings with those who would come.

For a number of years, Ranger wrote scathing letters and eventually sued the following thirteen church officials for fifty thousand ($50,000) dollars:

1. Bishop R. E. Woodard
2. Rev. N. Godfrey
3. Rev. A. J. Hines
4. Rev. B. E. Allen
5. Bishop J. O. Patterson
6. Bishop Dewitt Burton
7. Bishop Samuel Crouch
8. Bishop Wyoming Wells
9. Bishop O. M. Kelly
10. Bishop J. W. White
11. Bishop L. H. Ford
12. Bishop J. A. Blake
13. Bishop F. D. Washington

Owing to his behavior, May 3, 1972, Ranger received a letter from Bishop DeWitt A. Burton, General Secretary, informing Ranger that “[t]he General Board in a unanimous decision did remove [him] from office as the Presiding Bishop of South East Jurisdiction of Texas” for “insubordination” and “[f]ailure to recognize the constituted authority of the Churc of God in Christ.” May 10, 1972, Bishop J. O. Patterson, Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ, acknowledged having received Ranger’s appeal to the board. Approximately two months later, July 18, 1972, Bishop Patterson and General Board came to Texas Southeast to consecrate Rev. R.E. Woodard Bishop of Texas Southeast. Attempting to assuage matters, November 16, 1972, the Committee of Review of the General Assembly “recommend[ed] that Bishop Ranger meet the conditions of reconciliation with the Presiding Bishop and the General Board, and be

---

allowed to preside over the men who desire[d] to work with him. 23 After the dividing of the state of Texas proper, by 1981 Texas had been led by the following bishops:

Bishop R.E. Ranger  
Bishop F. L. Hanes  
Bishop J.E. Alexander  
Bishop T.D. Iglehart  
Bishop M.G. Grady  
Bishop S. D. Lee  
Bishop C.H. Nelson  
Bishop R.E. Woodard 24

With the storm now over, the COGIC in Houston and abroad regrouped and continued to enjoy the fruit of increased prosperity and prestige. The organization emerged stronger than ever.

AAIPC Women in Ministry:

AAIPC's of the 1970s also witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of women pastors. C.B. Arnold (Acreage Homes), W.L. Jennings (Heights), Lura Guillery (Trinity Gardens), and Ezzie Mae Williams (Setygast) all launched their ministries during in this time. The AAIPC movement gave them room for a kind expression that COGIC denied. Different from white Pentecostal and AAIPC church women, COGIC females permitted to “teach” not “preach.” Although it may appear strange at first that leaders maintained their firm position despite the pervasive influence of the Women’s Liberation Movement, when one considers that the COGIC Women’s Department has long held the purse of the organization, what appears to be exclusion on the part of COGIC men turns out to be accommodation on the part of women.

Women who joined the AAIPC movement wanted the freedom to pastor churches, not direct programs alone. Worthy Love Jennings was among them. Similar to many of the AAIPC pastors thus far discussed, Jennings was not a native Houstonian. Born in Winnfield, Louisiana, to Alvester Alexander and Sallie M. (Coleman) Alexander, Worthy Love and her older sister, Eddie B. migrated to Texas in

24 Woodard’s State Supervisors in succession were Mother Maud Thomas and thereafter Mother Butler.
the 1950s while some of their other relatives continued a migratory trek to California. Worthy arrived in the Bayou City with a diploma from Webster High School (1957) and several semesters of college from Grambling State University. Finding not only a caring pastor and church home at Leola Crawford’s Miracle House of Prayer but also a loving husband, Jennings decided to settle in Houston.

Raised Methodist, Jennings did not set out to become a minister. When asked what circumstances led to her salvation, Jennings replied that she was perplexed and sought prayer concerning her son’s deformed leg. While she willingly approached the altar to get help for her son, she herself resisted the conversion experience. She recalls: “I was wearing a tight fish-tail red dress...I had it in my mind, I don’t want in. [i.e., to be converted] Mother Baker and Mother Crawford said, ‘Tell the Lord, ‘Yes,’ but I said, ‘No.’ However, the saints of yesteryear proved to be just as tenacious as their unrelenting candidate whose individual audacity alone was reflected in her daring to wear “red” in a Pentecostal church. As Jennings recalled, the saints “would gather around ...[and] labor until you got saved. Until 1:00 in the morning, if it came to that.” Jennings recalled, “[T]hey didn’t [let me loose] and say ‘Oh, she don’t want nothing.’ They bound the strong man...They worked until they broke that stubborn will down. They said ‘The Lord wants to take you a little deeper. He wants to fill you with the Holy Ghost.” Jennings was saved that night. Further solidifying her experience, Jennings lived with Pastor Crawford, and eventually Jennings became aware of an even greater call to ministry. Prayer was inevitably a component of the training process. Jennings recalled that many times when she prepared for bed, “a knock would come on the door.” Pastor Crawford would enter and remind her of the need to pray. In obedience to her pastor, Jennings often interceded for others throughout the night. Yet she managed “go to work at 5:30 A.M. directly.” After demonstrating spiritual stability and faithfulness to

---

25 W.L. Jennings, Questionnaire # 1, 1989.
the church for nearly ten years, Jennings accepted a call to ministry in 1968, received informal theological training at the City of Lights, and started pastoring the Miracle House of Prayer in 1971.

When Jennings started pastoring, she faced the chief issue confronting other AAIPC pastors of the 1970s: a dearth of finances. Jennings’s accounts suggest that even though the children of AAIP’s had begun to take advantage of increased educational opportunities throughout the Southwest and nation, pastors themselves had a difficult time securing financial resources for independent African American congregations, especially Pentecostal ones. Hard economic times meant that AAIPs were forced to rely on each other for support in matters great and small. This supportive relationship was most vividly represented in legendary, Pentecostal “rides to church.” Jennings recounted that because many of their members did not have cars early in her ministry, she and her husband would have to provide them with transportation to church from Acreage Homes, Sunnyside, and Pleasant Ville, often making more than one trip before service started. As saints entered the crowded vehicle, “they’d say, ‘Excuse me for being so heavy’” while proceeding to sit on each others laps. The general lack of finances among many was reflected in their creative attire; “Saints would make dresses out of Pillsbury flour sacks.” According to Jennings, “Pillsbury started getting smart and putting designs on them because the saints prayed for [them]...You’d hear them testifying, ‘I thank the Lord for this dress. It didn’t cost me nothing; I just bought the flour.’” The combination of necessity and scarce financial resources forced them to improvise in other ways as well. While female church members sometimes use lemon or vanilla extract for perfume, in the absence of olive oil, ministers used lard to anoint saints who desired prayer. “[They would] grease us down,” Jennings chuckled with nostalgia.26

While she and other women pastor were ridiculed for their efforts, Jennings found enduring support in her husband, Major Jennings, also a native of Louisiana. Jennings

26 Karen Kossie, Field notes from a message by Worthy Jennings.
was admired not only for his constant appreciation for his wife’s ministry, but also for his “gifted” hands. The saints employed his services to repair irreparable cars, air conditioners or anything mechanical. He often testified that he would pray and ask God to help him solve various electrical problems. The answers to his questions were frequently communicated through dreams or through “spirit inspired” slights of the hand that always managed to get the job done.27

Ezzie Mae Williams received similar support from her late husband for her evangelistic efforts and renovation programs. Williams’s account suggests that her husband supported her because she managed to respect his authority in the home.

After evangelizing for approximately three years, Williams, a native of Midway, Texas,28 started her church on Pardee St. in the Settigast area. There Williams and eight members began to save money to build a new church. As Williams recalls, members seemed to join the church with precise timing, e.g., according to their respective, needed abilities. For example, a master carpenter figured among the original eight members. Apart from a single monthly Sunday offering, Williams did not receive the tithe to expedite the building process. According to Williams “carpenters just began to join her church.” With two additional carpenters, Williams’s husband and the first carpenter started to construct the sanctuary. As subsequent members joined, their skills seemed to coincide with the church’s current needs:

The brothers of the church built that church. We didn’t have to hire anybody but the bricklayer. Then later on, an air-conditioning man join the church. He put the air-conditioning in free. And God gave me everything we needed accept a bricklayer. God moved for us to build that church for $20,000.00. God always provided the money every time we needed something. We didn’t have a lot of money to start off with. We just raised money as we went. The carpenters did all their work free.

27 Quite ironically, in 1990, Jennings was electrocuted.
28 Williams was from Midway, TX, near Huntsville, and her husband, from Palestine, in East Texas. Her parents moved to Houston to find work. She lived with her grandmother until age fifteen at which point she moved to Houston and finished her secondary education there.
Then the Lord sent professional people and they had big tithes. It made it easier to get the money. [Teachers, social workers, businessmen, a Shell-Oil employee, and a nurse. ] They had good jobs and nice tithes. I didn’t take them. We put them all into the church.29

Despite Williams early success, she still faced the criticism of those who did not believe that women were called to preach. One opposing group had made “closing up” the churches of women pastors in the Houston Area their personal mission. The said group even paid Williams a visit—three men and a lady:

They just crossed their legs...looked in their bibles. We didn’t know who they were. [But] the Lord began to speak through Joyce, a professional, through prophecy. She’s very smart, and she was a prophetess. She said “You men have come in here to start trouble and the Lord said that you must repent.” And they came to the altar and repented. [One of the brothers] came up and said, ‘I couldn’t do that to you because I knew you were real.’ The Lord really moved that night. Even the little children were shouting.

Although Williams governed her church, she was careful to relinquish her managerial stand in the home:

I new some women pastors, but there weren’t too many that I wanted to be like. Because of their attitudes and things. Some of them were just mean. [But] the Lord spoke to me and said [that] the people had made them mean. So I was determined not to let the people make me mean. People [were] so disobedient and unruly until they [forced their pastors to become] extra bossy.30

Not wanting to lose her feminine grace, she determined to be a compassionate leader. As one young woman’s testimony to her indicated, Williams had succeeded; humility, she believed, was the key.

I knew a young lady [who] had complemented me on being the kind of leader I was. She said that I was an humble leader, [unlike] most of the

29 Karen Kossie, Telephone interview with Ezzie Mae Williams, August, 1997.
30 Ibid.
women pastors she knew who bossed their husbands...and had a difficult time switching roles.\textsuperscript{31}

Fortunately for Williams, she had learned how to negotiate power.

\textit{Blessed in the Field:}

By the 1970s, the economic tide had begun to make a favorable turn in the Bayou City. The greatest social strides occurred among AAIPCs who took advantage of unprecedented educational and professional opportunities newly afforded African Americans throughout the Southwest, and among those who adopted the view that possessing money in abundance was not sinful. The seed of progress planted in the 1970s eventually bore fruit in the 1980s in at least four resident AAIPC families all underscoring the generational socio-economic strides resulting from increased opportunities for African Americans within and without the city. The scholarly and professional accomplishments of the Martin, Pierrott, Lockett, and Kossie children, all baby-boomers, were harbingers of better economic times among AAIPCs. Among the four families are businessmen, doctors, lawyers, nurses, educators, and media personalities. The achievements of the Locketts were eventually recognized nationally in the 1980s when Jesse Jackson named them the “Rainbow Coalition Family of the Year.”\textsuperscript{32} Darryl Martin made local history for his family when he purchased Houston’s first black-owned gospel radio station in 1988: KWWJ (Keep Walking With Jesus). Darryl’s sister Cheryl Martin initiated her career in media via Houston’s KFMK radio station while still a student at Bellaire High School. After obtaining a degree in journalism, Cheryl Martin moved to the east coast where she remains. Martin is currently the anchorwoman for Black Entertainment Network’s (BET) Sunday night program “Lead Story” Monday through Friday she is a senior newsreporter in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Houston Chronicle}. (Article to be relocated).
\textsuperscript{33} Karen Kossie, Notes from an unrecorded Telephone Interview with Sister Ormie (Bryant) Martin, February 20, 1998. Sister Ormie Martin and her husband life stories reflect secular and spiritual migrations. A native of Enterprise, Texas, near Nacogdoches, Martin said she vowed to “get out of
Without doubt, the advent of the Charismatic Movement influenced the traditional Pentecostal attitude towards socio-economic progress. With converts from various well established denominations, Charismatics brought with them a penchant for organization and attention to economic detail which distinguished them from traditional Pentecostals. Whereas the mainline Pentecostals prided themselves in being in this world but not of it, Charismatics, sought to transform society into a veritable heaven on earth. The method and structure that they brought to the table would revolutionize the profile of the Saved, Sanctified, and Fired Baptized. This combination of religion and economics proved crucial to the eventual expansion of independent charismatic ministries. In a tangential way, Reverend Ike Renkoter might also have provoked traditional Pentecostals to re-examine what he described as a “pie-in-the-sky” attitude. While Ike was certainly outside the mainstream of Pentecostalism, his traditional Pentecostal background could not be denied. A “pretty preacher” Reverend Ike challenged his listeners with his popular signature adage, “You can’t lose with the stuff I use.” Because of his material flamboyance (he owned a fleet of Rolls Royces), good looks, and intelligence Ike secured interviews with such talk show hosts as Johnny Carson. Even though Ike was largely rejected by traditional Pentecostals because of his overemphasis on materialism, increased economic opportunity for Pentecostals throughout the nation forced ministers to reinterpret their poverty-appreciative stance on biblical economics.

The establishment and rapid growth of the Demos Shakarian’s Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI) in the 1960s indicated the beginnings of a more palatable shift in the relationship between Charismatic-Pentecostals and money. Shakarian was a millionaire California dairy farmer of Armenian descent.

[Enterprise] as soon as [she had] finished this crop.” Her husband, a native of Oxford, Mississippi served in the U.S. armed forces along with three brothers with whom he shared the same barracks. He was stationed in Tampa, Florida. Sister Martin credits their strong Baptist convictions for providing them with the fortitude to return safely from the ravages of World War II. Martin was introduced to Pentecostalism at age seven at a COGIC church that now bares the name Bethlehem Temple COGIC (many Pentecostal churches did not have names then). Her husband joined the Pentecostal movement via Bishop H. W. Falls’s Zion Temple COGIC in 1949, four years after Martin’s arrival to Houston.
His organization peaked in the latter 1970s as an increasing number of Pentecostal-Charismatics embraced its "prosperity-now" philosophy. Several chapters of FGBMFI were formed in the Houston Area. Businessmen Ron Haskell and Brown Walker were active in the Houston/Bay Area chapter.

Although Houston's signature boomtown spirit of the "Bigger and Better" permeated inhabitants of the city, the greater African-American community began to separate into polarized economic ends. While prosperity talk made sense in black suburbia; its "name-it-and-claim-it" approach fell on parched ground in inner city communities. Increasingly isolated, blacks in urban areas throughout the country experienced years of economic leaness and despair. The experiences of Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, Apostle E.W. Wilcotts, and Bishop R. Taylor reflect the effects of the aforementioned developments.

As the experience of members of the present-day Latter Day Revival Church attests, growth among second generation AAIPC churches was much slower. Full of blue-collars workers and housewives, the congregation started its spiritual journey on Green and Meadows Street in the Fifth Ward and eventually relocated to the Old Lyons Theater 4036 Lyons Avenue in 1970. Mozelle Satcherwhite, who joined the church after a five-year period of intermittent visits and volunteer service (1966-1971), remembered that the process was not a task for the faint hearted. "It was a lot of work...cleaning up the church, yes, Lord!" In addition to preparing the huge dilapidated structure for worship, members had to raise funds for the remodeling program. Fundraising programs tended to match the social profile of the members even within congregations. Mrs. Satcherwhite along with her mother-in-law and next door neighbor, Jerline Satcherwhite, sold barbecue, pickles, and soda pop at home to support the ministry. Other members conducted similar projects from their homes. Mother Nellie Heart sold cakes, the pastor barbecued, and others participated by taking and delivering dinners to willing patrons in the neighborhood or in their places of employment.
According to the pastor, barbecue sales provided the $1000.00 down-payment that members needed to acquire the structure. Yet growth was slow because the Lyons Avenue area experienced an insurmountable economic depression. A high crime rate and city planning converged to drained the little life that remained on this once heavily frequented Avenue. When Kossie arrived, the Avenue and surrounding areas were in a state of continual decline. Building a structure in what was quickly becoming a deserted part of town, better forgotten than remembered according to some African Americans, was a monumental undertaking.

E.W. Wilcotts of the Bible Days Revival Church located on 1301 Quitman Street also in Fifth Ward employed a different development program. Wilcott’s church gained in popularity as the suave minister introduced his catchy *P.P.P. Prayer Package*. Reflecting the growth of his ministry, throughout the 1960s and 70s, his radio broadcasts and television programs reached anyone in the area who chose to tune in. Under the talented direction of Sister Wyatt and later Madame Crosby, Wilcott’s music department began to host a series of spirited musicals which drew large crowds of worshippers.

While Wilcotts certainly experienced his prosperous moments, Bishop R. Taylor, a former Wilcotts member, was among the first to exemplify the budding marriage of capitalism and AAIPC Christianity. Bishop R. Taylor may have helped to recover with an ongoing series of revivals, musicals, and live recordings at his young, bustling New Day Deliverance Holiness Church. Attracting a growing number of well educated Pentecostals including members of the Martin and nationally acclaimed Lockett families, Taylor’s church was perhaps the fastest growing independent Pentecostal-Charismatic church in the Greater Houston Area in the 1970s. His ministry was further popularized by New Day’s weekly radio broadcast. Taylor established a reputation as a shrewd businessman, one of the first of his kind among a growing number of preacher/entrepreneurs in Houston. While traditional Pentecostal churches raised funds by selling fish, chicken, and barbecue dinners, Taylor did so by making his church available to national and area
artists for live recordings, through church-sponsored musicals, and by inviting popular evangelists national Independent Pentecostal-Charismatic and COGIC. Such orators as Mr. Clean and Bishop Alfred Hinton (Chicago) preached to crowds that filled Taylor’s sanctuary to capacity.

Growth at New Day was also spurred by the population shift occurring in Houston’s black communities. Areas like the Fifth Ward, where Kossie and Wilcotts churches were located, lost an increasing number of African Americans to newly integrated suburban areas in the Northeast and Southeastern sections of town. Bishop R. Taylor New Day Deliverance Revival Center Church was situated in the bustling northeast section of Houston. Having acquired the largest and most impressive edifice among AAIPC pastors in Houston at the time, Taylor’s New Day became a premier church attracting Houston’s AAIPC elite—a “light-blue-collar” amalgam of carpenters, bricklayers, teachers, ministers, nurses, businessmen, and a few medical doctors and dentists. Taylor purchased the church from a white Pentecostal congregation that had fled the browning of northeast Houston.

As the 1970s neared a close, the collective influence of Houston’s most popular AAIPC pastors was gradually diffused by growth as black community became the fastest growing in the South and by the bitter-sweet fruit of integration. Newcomers, despite their denominational affiliation, had no need to pay homage to local AAIPC generals such as Bishops H.W. Falls and J.L. Parker. Besides a new post-civil rights generation was on the scene, one that did not necessarily settle in the popular black areas of town. A growing college-educated black middle class began to demand more of black Pentecostal pastors and their memberships. They wanted more structure in every way, especially in the area punctuality. Saints had developed a notorious reputation for running behind schedule, often gathering at “dark thirty” for programs that promised to start at a precise

---

hour on the clock. They were also criticized for holding very long services. Recalling his earlier days at Bishop J.L. Parker, Kossie remembered, “[i]f you got out at 11:30 PM, you were doing good.” The small-town loyalty enjoyed by leaders of the 1940s-1960s was increasingly interrupted by the crescent complexity of an ever-expanding “Big City”, then the seventh largest in the United States. As the children of some traditional Pentecostals acquired more education, others joined the most “progressive” AAIPC congregations in the area or changed denominations by joining the Baptist or Methodist congregations.

Many others took advantage of the freedom to explore and welcomed experiments with white religious culture despite being criticized for their departures. After attending white non-denominational or Assemblies of God churches that reluctantly tolerated their presence, many were surprised to learned that white western Christianity and racism had been long-standing bedfellows.

Integration was often a painful subject for AAIPC pastors. Some had a difficult time understanding why members whom they had spent so much time nurturing seemingly had little problem changing their membership to churches where they would simply become one in the midst of hundreds or thousands. Others realized that anonymity and respite from struggle was exactly what some were seeking. The fact that the receiving pastor was white made matters more painful. Moreover, many pastors and those who vowed to remain faithful to the black church stereotyped those who left AAIPC churches to attend predominantly white ones as “sell-outs” or as individuals who were having problems with their identity; for those who left, the “white man’s ice was colder, and his sugar sweeter.”

As the barriers of deep-seated Christian racism resisted fundamental change, many black Christians began to rediscover an appreciate for the AAIPC church. The thirst for change and new challenges, however, continued to attract young black men of the cloth. Because of the democratization of power that lay at the core of Pentecostal-Charismatic
movements, young ministers found that it provided an excellent avenue for expending the energy and zeal gained during the civil rights and Black Power movements. The floodgates of change were opened. Only those prepared to ride the waves of change would survive. Despite the difficulties, however, a little of everything—old and new—crossed the threshold of the eighties a bit disheveled, but alive and well.

Political Activism vs. the Birth of the “Bapticosts”:

While newly prospering saints gave God the general glory, members of the AAIPC community as well as black in other black religious communities were direct beneficiaries of the efforts of local political activists. Black ministers throughout the city, namely Baptists, were well aware that black entrepreneurs were excluded from the Houston’s greater business community. Given that civil rights activism of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s focused largely on political (Smith v. Alright, 1944), educational issues (Sweatt v. Painter 1950), and social issues (Texas Southern University students’ sit-ins), the struggle for economic parity and inclusion did not begin to take shape until the 1970s.

After attending a meeting in Chicago at which Jesse Jackson outlined the goals of a second-phase organization founded in the mid-1960s—Operation Breadbasket. The program was initiated by Reverend Leon Sullivan of Philadelphia in the early 1950s. Sullivan organized four hundred ministers and their combined congregations in a grand boycott against companies that discriminated against blacks in Philadelphia.35 In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., adopted this technique for the organization the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which he headed. SCLC established chapters of

---

35 Yet his ministry was marred in the 1970s by a volatile domestic dispute that made the headlines of the Forward Times, July 10, 1971: “Preacher’s Wife Jailed—Nude Beating Alleged.” Wilcott’s ex-wife, Carol Sue Wilcotts, then his “29-year-old estranged wife,” was charged with “beating, kidnapping, and threatening to kill” Debbie Taylor, a 24-year-old woman who worked for Wilcotts ministry and lived in an apartment rented by the then separated Wilcotts. Carol Sue Wilcotts suspected Debbie Taylor of having informed Wilcotts’s husband of the former’s alleged infidelity which Taylor claimed “everyone” knew about. When Detectives J. P. Paulk and D.R. Spurlock arrived at Debbie Taylor’s Keeland Street apartment to arrest Carol Sue Wilcotts, they found the Reverend E.W. Wilcotts who told officials that he, too, was sought the whereabouts of his wife. Because of E.W. Wilcotts’ popularity and his Pentecostal denominal affiliation, the story riveted Houston’s African American community, and embarrassed area Pentecostals whose spiritual claims of moral superiority were suddenly challenged by the messy domestic affairs of one its leading pastors.
Breadbasket in over fifteen cities across the nation. The charismatic Jesse Jackson was chosen to establish a national base for the program in Chicago.

Believing in the tenets of the program—to encourage capitalism and economic development—four ministers from Houston attended a meeting in Chicago in 1966 at which Martin Luther King, Jr., appointed Jesse Jackson to head the operation. Reverend William “Bill” Lawson, head of the SCLC Houston chapter, began a series of weekly meetings with an initial group of some thirty people interested in the program. Although Jesse Jackson visited the Bayou City to help encourage the group, the organization did not mature to the degree that it had in other cities with large black populations.

Blacks were not spurred to action until the Burger King Corporation awarded one of its franchises to a white man despite the fact that a group of black businessmen had applied for the outlet. With the help Plurial Marshall, students from Texas Southern University and professional athletes protested Burger King’s discriminatory practices. Black customers ceased to patronize the business and expanded their efforts when rumor spread that Burger King promised never to grant a franchise to blacks. The picketing and general boycott proved successful. Within a month the white owner of the franchise in question lost thousands of dollars and was forced out of the business. Other Burger King outlets suffered as well. The company eventually granted the franchise to a group of young black businessmen who later acquired a second one.36

The role of the Baptist minister-politician demonstrated in the aforementioned scenario, was on the decline despite continued successes from time to time. Ironically, the fruit of the very movement that such ministers cultivated precipitated this change. For now, an increasing number of professional politicians made their way into political circles. Moreover, a professionally diversified black community showed the willingness to led the preacher preach and the politician handle social matters. While the shift among

Black Baptist ministers toward greater spirituality and away from a purely social gospel began in the 1970s, the transition is clearly evident in the 1980s and 1990s.

The seemingly quick success of Pastor John Osteen, formerly a Baptist minister, was definitely a harbinger of the changing times. Starting his ministry in a barn and eventually building an 8000-seat structure that drew local politicians to witness its dedication, John Osteen’s example encouraged pastors black and white to join the independent movement. Osteen’s largely white but increasingly integrated congregation suggested that the economic boom had reached Houston’s white Pentecostal-Charismatic community; surely, AAIPCs were not far behind.

The Old Time Way:

Even while many AAIPCs appreciated the unprecedented educational and financial progress that willing adherents were making, any number of churches resisted what they deemed to be too much worldliness. Believing that Christian women should adore themselves in humility, they continued to forbid the use of make-up and the wearing of pants, and stood firm against the rising hem lines of the 1970s. The women in some of the churches continued to wear laced handkerchiefs on their heads in obedience to Paul’s suggestion that they be covered in the church. Others refused to have their hair perm ed, pressed, or braided. Their actions, however, had little or no connection to the Black political activism and Africa-mania. They did so in an effort to demonstrate externally the sanctified, purified life within. As any number of young women evidenced having problems with their flesh, i.e., an alarming number were having children out of wedlock), Pentecostals who had begun to ignore legalism were quick to retort that dress length alone was an ineffective deterrent the works of the flesh. They insisted on a holy

---

37 John Osteen had been pastoring for more than forty years when his Oasis of Love began to mushroom. During his annual ministers conference held in the summer of 1997, he confided to his audience that he had no idea that his ministry would grow as quickly as it did. He recounted the story of a member in his church who insisted on purchasing several acres of land, the purpose of which Osteen admitted he did not see, particularly given the church’s limited budget at the time. He told his audience that his own level of trust and faith had to “catch up” with that of his member. The said member bought the land with his own funds, securing it for the church’s future use.
life “lived,” not “worn.” Unwavering in their position, many traditionalists, recognizing the importance of patience and Christian love, vowed simply to pray for their misguided brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Apostle A.S. Johnson was among those determined to hold on to the old time way without apprehension. The name of his ministry “Back To God Revival Church,” suggests his basic view of the liberal spirit that he believed had charmed many a once-holy saint. A native Houstonian, Johnson turned the city’s AAIPC community of the 1970s upside-down with his “take-no-prisoners” homiletic style. He turned to the bayou city after having experienced conversion in Baltimore, Maryland.

Prior to his salvation, Johnson had lived life filled with crime and drugs. Realizing that he was on a destructive path, Johnson decided that he wanted out of the drug world when he watch a elderly woman and drug dealer whom he and others regarded as a hero die violently. He related that his behavior and that of many other young black men often stemmed from biological and national fatherlessness. Their natural fathers were in literal or spiritual absentia neglecting to communicate with their sons. To complicate matters, the nation itself treated young black men like so many unwanted sons, particularly those who were far removed from the American “money” stream.

Deciding that he would rather die than continue to live in misery, Johnson took a gun and rented a hotel room where he planned to commit suicide, the growing trend among young urban black males of his generation. As Johnson walked down the corridor, he glanced through the open door of a man whom he would learn was a gospel preacher. With his worn bible spread wide open on the bed, he welcomed Johnson in. Their meeting would mark a turning point in Johnson’s life. He eventually went to church and was baptized in the Holy Spirit. So eternally grateful for his salvation, Johnson began to testify of his deliverance wherever he could and to whomever would listen, even to those who might have determined not too. As he recalled, his testimony became more and more

---

elaborate and increasingly sanctioned by a presence that captivated his listeners. Slowly but surely the former drug addict, robber, and murderer was being transformed into an independent Pentecostal revivalist.

It was at this level of intensity that Johnson reentered the city of Houston. With the gifts of healing and prophecy in operation, he left no stone unturned. Those who heard him preach believed him to be a God-sent. While he prayed for one woman attending a revival at the Latter Day Revival Church, the woman began to scream in a loud voice of thanksgiving and gratitude, “I can see! I can see!” The church went up in praise. Lean, mean, and holy-clean, Johnson packed out tent meetings throughout the city. His church mushroomed to some three-hundred members in less than five years. As with so many young ministers who experience great successes early in their ministries, the impact of his ministry outgrew his ability to manage its every aspect. Eventually the unforgivable occurred: Johnson and his first wife divorced. Houston’s traditional AAIPC community dropped him almost instantaneously. His invitations to minister plummeted; Johnson had fallen from grace. Not to worry. He would certainly “get back to God.”

Sing a New Song!

As black Pentecostals migrated into new urban centers like Houston and into novel fields of study and expertise, so too did their gospel music artists. Some remained faithful to the “down home” gospel styles of the award-winning Staple Singers, and others to semi-classical art forms as did Houston’s Sara Jordan Powell, daughter of a COGIC bishop. Still others gravitated to the fresh new sound of contemporary gospel music largely produced on the west coast.

Nephew of Mother Emma Frances Crouch, a native Texan who would eventually become National Supervisor of Women for COGIC (1994-1996), award winner Andraé Crouch was among the first Pentecostals to experiment with new sounds in the 1970s.

---

39 Earline Allen, Course Outline, “COGIC History at a Glance.” The chronological order of the tenures of National COGIC Church Mothers/Supervisors is as follows: Mother Lizzie Woods Roberson (1911-1945); Mother Lillian Brooks Coffey (1945-1964); Mother Anne L. Bailey (1964-1975); Mother Mattie McGlothlen (1975-1994); Mother Emma Crouch (1994-1996); Mother Willie Mae Rivers (1996-present).
although he maintained conservative lyrics that made gospel message clear. Despite his creative mixture of the old and the new, Crouch’s choices concerned some black Christians who feared that his “contemporary/integrationist” format did not respect the traditional “black gospel” sound.

According to research, Crouch’s “father called Andraé, laid hands on him and prayed for the gift of music to be given to him. Within two week[s] Andraé played his first hymn on the piano.⁴⁰ While acting as the musician for his father’s church. Crouch engaged the entire gamut of the black gospel music expressed through the music styles of holiness churches, Thomas A. Dorsey, Mahalia Jackson and others.⁴¹ A trendsetter, Crouch moved away from traditional gospel, creatively fusing country, rhythm and blues, jazz, and Latin rock.⁴² For example, his songs “Through It All” and “I Don’t Know Why Jesus Loved Me” repackaged the traditional gospel message in the new “Tin Pan Alley of Hollywood.” Crouch further distinguished himself by employing “a hip approach” to his vocal delivery.

Further suggesting his diversity, Crouch’s gospel music was performed and recorded by a variety of artists including the late Elvis Presley, The Imperials, and The Jessy Dixon Singers. He also appeared with Billy Preston, Santana, Johnny Cash, Pat Boone and Billy Graham. Attracting white and black followers, and eventually surpassing the boundaries of his COGIC upbringing, Crouch captivated gospel music lovers throughout the nation and world in both the religious and secular arena. Accordingly, many of his songs have become gospel music classics and are therefore frequently anthologized.

The Hawkins Family Singers experienced similar success. Again of COGIC descent, leader Edwin Hawkins earned the distinction of being the first gospel singer to

⁴² Ibid.
have a single, “Oh Happy Day,” secure the number-one spot on both pop and gospel music charts in *Ebony* Magazine’s Black Music Poll.⁴³ The 1975 results were as follows:

**Group:**

1. Edwin Hawkins Singers  
2. Mighty Clouds of Joy  
3. Rance Allen Group

**Album:**

1. Gospel in My Soul  
2. In the Ghetto (James Cleveland)  
3. It’s Time (Mighty Clouds of Joy)

**Choir:**

1. New York Community Choir  
2. Southern California Community Choir  
3. Beautiful Zion Baptist of Chicago

**Female Singer:**

1. Shirley Caesar  
2. Inez Andrews  
3. Marion Williams

**Male Singer:**

1. James Cleveland  
2. Rev. Cleophys Robinson  
3. Alex Bradford

Among those listed in an impressive line of Pentecostal gospel artists during the 1970s was Houston’s Sarah Jordan Powell. The daughter of a COGIC preacher, Jordan grew up sharing her rare talent from coast to coast.⁴⁴ It was, therefore, no surprise that she was listed among the nominees on *Ebony*’s 1975 annual gospel music awards voting sheet. Jordan’s ascent to sustained national prominence was interrupted by a devasting car

---

⁴³ *Ebony* Magazine initiated the nation’s first black music poll in 1973.  
accident in the late 1970s, however. After a long recuperative period, she resumed her vocal career.\textsuperscript{45}

Jordan’s 1975 nomination along with the successes of the Edwin Hawkins Singers and Andraé Crouch and the Disciples signified a change that was not to be reversed. The “children of the saints,” Pentecostal-born performers, meshed a fresh gospel sound with novel instrumentation. Because of their creativity and expertise, they now shared the spotlight with James Cleveland, reigning Prince of gospel music, and long-favored quartet groups. As these young descendants of the “Grand Old Church” (COGIC) took their places, they influenced others to embellish their traditional Baptist harmonic structures\textsuperscript{46} with neo-Pentecostal modalities.

\textbf{Gospel Choirs:}

The rise of gospel choirs on white college campuses throughout the country and Southwest in the post-civil rights era again reflected the enduring importance of communal worship. Accordingly, Eileen Southern noted that choirs were established to help affirm the racial identity of black students as they adjusted to the demands of white society.\textsuperscript{47} Among the first scholars to note the cultural link, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya argued that “although official administrative approval (and funding) were usually delayed and always apprehensive...Even black college students who attended white colleges and university have often established gospel choirs as an affirmation and

\textsuperscript{45} Powell also made both organizational and artistic contributions to State Representative Al Edward’s Annual Juneteenth Festival celebrated in Houston’s Miller Outdoor Theater, located in Hermann Park. Leaving her home church, William’s Memorial Church of God in Christ, one of the richest COGIC churches in the state if not the country, Powell eventually joined Carlton Pearson’s Higher Dimensions Ministry, located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was she who introduced Bishop Pearson to the ministry of T.D. Jakes of West, Virginia. An introduction that impacted pentecostal and interdenominational circles in a manner heretofore unprecedented. Both Pearson and Jakes will be discussed later in this work.

\textsuperscript{46} Previous inductees and their childhood religious affiliations are as follows: Shirley Caesar (Baptist); Rev. James Cleveland (Baptist); Sam Cooke (Baptist); the Dixie Hummingbirds (Baptist), the Mighty Clouds of Joy (Baptist), the Staple Singers (Baptist), and Clara Ward (Pentecostal).

\textsuperscript{47}Southern, 568.
continuation of their heritage.” As Cheryl Sanders notes, however, “tension remains between Pentecostalism and more quietistic expression of denominational Protestantism” on some college campuses. Sanders recounts an example of such on the Howard University campus:

The Howard University Gospel Choir was organized in 1969. At a worship service celebrating the choir’s twenty-fifth anniversary in the spring of 1994, it was reported that two female students organized the choir after they each had dreamed of such a choir and shared their dreams with each other. At the time, students who majored in music were required to sing for the worship services at Rankin Chapel, in the university choir, whose repertoire excluded gospel music, clapping, holy dancing, or any other bodily movement with the music. Some students felt the need to sing music that reflected their own sense of religious and cultural authenticity and the gospel choir gave them that opportunity. The choir quickly became a spiritual community that reflected some of the ecstatic worship and the moral rigorism of the Sanctified church tradition. Students were able to sing, clap, shout, and move with the music as they please. Several person have testified that they were saved or miraculously rescued from danger while in the choir, after having experienced collegiate life as a period of seeking adult identity, rejecting their “church upbringing, “being influenced by peers, and partying. The choir sponsored its own Bible studies, prayer meetings, and worships services. Clearly and unequivocally, the Pentecostal perspective emerged as the dominant factor in determining the direction of the choir and its repertoire.

Pentecostal Chaplain Stephen N. Short examined the relationship between Pentecostalism and black identity on the Howard campus in “Pentecostal Student Movement at Howard: 1946-1977.” According to Short’s findings, Pentecostal students organized at Howard in 1946 but were denied official university recognition until 1966. Their cause eventually taken up Bishop Munroe Saunders of the United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic), then a graduate student at the Howard School of Religion. Having organized the Pentecostal student movements at Morgan State University and Coppin State College, Saunders convinced a member of the Howard divinity school

49 Cheryl Sanders, Saints in Exile, 93.
50 Sanders, 93.
51 Cited in Sanders, 94.
faculty to serve as faculty advisor to the United Pentecostal Association. When the group sought the approval of their advisor to sponsor a concert on the campus, the advisor refused to sign the requisite permission forms unless it could be guaranteed that "no one would shout, 'get happy,' or other wise express himself in the prevailing emotional patterns common to the Pentecostal church."\textsuperscript{52}

The story of Pentecostals on the Howard University campus finds resonance with that of the University of Texas's Inner Visions of Blackness gospel choir, one which became a springboard for revival and a threshing ground for a variety of ministries. When Kimberly Kossie and Yolanda Rutledge Jarmon arrived on the U.T. campus in 1984, they respectively brought with them some 20 and 3 years of Pentecostal-Charismaticism. Kossie had been reared in her father's inner-city church, the Latter Day Revival Church, located in Houston's Fifth Ward; Rutledge-Jarmon experienced salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit at John Osteen's well-known Oasis of Love. Kossie's and Rutledge-Jarmon's black cultural heritage had been securely established prior to embarking upon their college careers in that both were graduates of Forest Brook High School, one of two high schools in the North Forest Independent School District, the largest black district in the state of Texas; and each was reared in Northeast Houston, Kossie in the now resegregated Scenic Woods; Jarmon in bucolic Shadydale community. Having served as Student Body President of a high school containing 2000 plus students, Kossie had solidified a reputation as a leader with wisdom beyond her years. Her original poem "The Journey to Success" hinted at her talent as a writer.

Meanwhile, Rutledge-Jarmon captured students and teachers with her poetic skills, authoring poems that suggested a young woman of deep thought and remarkable ability. She often received requests to recite her poem "The Anatomy of a Black Woman." When she and Kossie arrived on the U.T. campus, they found themselves members of a more diverse black community. Honor students, valedictorians, and

\textsuperscript{52} Sanders, 94.
athletes; rich, middle class, and poor; the children of doctors; lawyers; preachers; managers; teachers, all figured among the brightest and most gifted young African Americans not only in the southwest, but in the country. They became part of a new “transnational” black educational elite.

Both gifted with oratorical skills and charisma, Kossie and Rutledge-Jarmon prayed, fasted, and eventually launched a revival on the U.T. campus among its black students, while managing their socio-educational pursuits. Yet neither was so heavenly minded that she was no earthly good. Jarmon, enlisted in the Armed forces, reported to military duty on weekends. Meanwhile Kossie served as a Residential Associate for the Jester dormitory. They were joined in their efforts by MBA graduate student and pastor-in-the-making, Shelton Bady of Saginaw, Michigan; Dr. Glenda Hodges, who was then pursuing a law degree at the University of Texas School of Law; Theodora Moten, eventually a spirit-filled Baptist, known for her wonderfully poetic Baptist-style prayers and authoritative voice; and Rene Fisher Overstreet (daughter-in-law of State Judge John Overstreet).

Talented and full of energy, they would attract a number of young African American men and women including Constance McKenzie (Human Resources Consultant), Shawndrae Johnson Canty (Pharmacist), Anthony Bernard Jones (Counselor) and a host of others. Not all African Americans on the U.T. campus appreciated Kossie’s and Rutledge-Jarmon’s Pentecostal predisposition, but the students foraged ahead with what they believed to be a God-sent revivalistic choir. After graduating from the University of Texas, Kossie, Rutledge-Jarmon and many others in that number later professed calls to ministry.

**Community Choirs:**

---

53 Constance McKenzie was valedictorian of Kashmere High School’s class of 1984.
54 Shawndrae Johnson Canty graduated with honors from Aldine High School. After obtaining her B.S. from the University of Texas at Austin, she obtained her graduate degree in Pharmacy from the University of Texas at Galveston, TX.
The Pentecostal-inspired appreciation for communal worship was also reflected in Extra-church community choirs. Achieving national prominence and a harbinger of interracial greater interracial cooperation, Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir (New York) made its mark on gospel music in America. Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Singers of Chicago (thanks to the contributions of award-winning songwriter Darius Brooks) and Mississippi Mass Choir also figured among those whose performances placed them at the top of radio music charts. Local choirs throughout the country waited for the new releases of such choirs so that they could quickly learn them and bedazzle their Sunday morning or concert audiences.

**Houston’s Southeast Inspirational Choir:**

While Houston’s Staple Singers were still captivating audiences with their “down-home” gospel further enhanced by a blues guitar, Houston’s Southeast Inspirational (SEIC) choir had begun made remarkable strides as a community choir. The organization was born in the winter of 1969-70 as the “Southeast Inspirational Youth Choir,” a combined choir containing youth from two separate church choirs respectively directed by Brenda Waters, Shirley Joiner, and eventually Carl Preacher. Although the original objective was “merely to raise funds for the youth choirs of the ... churches” involved, after the group’s first successful concert, organizers agreed to continue the choir as a separate entity.

Under the leadership of Shirley Joiner and Carl Preacher, the choir has recorded as many as seven albums, of which six were released on the Savoy and Jewel Labels. Owing to their success then SEIC has performed with many gospel music greats. In 1971, for example, the choir performed in the Gospel Music Worship of America, held that year in Dallas, Texas, and under the direction of the late Reverend James Cleveland. So outstanding was their presentation that they were named that year’s “Most Promising

---

55 *Ebony*, 1975.
56 Southeast Inspirational Choir, *Profile.*
Artist” award. As a result of their workshop performance, they were soon offered a contract to record their first album (“Some Sweet Day”) with Savoy Records, the gospel music industry’s number one record label. Since their initial recording, Southeast added eight others, two of which topped Billboard charts: “My Liberty” and “Inspire Me.”

SEIC has also performed with Sara Jordan Powell, Twinkie Clark (Clark Sisters), and the legendary Ray Charles. Their success and popularity meant that the choir received requests from throughout the nation to perform. Accordingly, members have traveled to “nearly every major city in the continental United States giving concerts on university campuses, in prisons, in convalescent homes, churches large and small, theaters, auditoriums, high schools, and parks.” In 1981, for example, SEIC earned top honors at the second Annual Gospel Appreciation Awards held at Texas Southern University.

Adding more color to its history, in the summer of 1984, SEIC was featured in “The Gospel of Colonus,” an off-Broadway production written and directed by Lee Bruer. In 1985, they also traveled to Europe (London, 1985); the Nassau, Bahamas; and Ontario, Canada. Three years later, SEIC performed at the opening ceremonies for the 1988 Christmas season held at the Wortham Center in Houston, Texas. And, in May of 1989, Southeast was one of two local choirs selected by country and western star Kenny Rogers to sing background for Rogers, Dolly Pardon and Willie Nelson during the debut of Ropers’s latest album Planet Texas. The “auspicious event” was held at the Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake Texas. Risé Joiner, SEIC member, and daughter of Shirley Joiner, had a very special, albeit unexpected, opportunity to sing a solo. Rogers simply “pulled her out of the choir” to render a number. Despite Joiner’s having thought she would “pass out,” Chronicle reporter affirmed that Joiner was “great.”

---

57 The Clark Sisters are the daughters of the late Dr. Mattie Moss Clark, former head of the national COGIC music.
Wanting to commemorate two decades of success in gospel music, Sunday February 11, 1990, the choir celebrated its 20th anniversary with a Rededication and Praise Concert at the Houston Music Hall. Its 28th anniversary concert was celebrated at Houston's St. Agnes Baptist Church. SEIC's success notwithstanding, organizers' and members' chief desire is that "many souls [be] saved." The organization's delineation of member's "hopes and expectations" suggests as much:

The hopes and expectations of the members [of SEIC], individually and collectively, are:

1. To bring Joy to the face of Jesus as they bring in the sheaves by the spreading of the Good News of Jesus'[s] love in song and testimony;
2. To be worthy of the might anointing of the Holy Christ which has been so freely given;
3. To continue to scale the mountains of impossibility and tread the valleys of despair that wherever dying men may be, there also may be the saving message of Jesus.61

To insure that choir members are fully acquainted with their gospel mission, "[a] serious study of the Word has been incorporated into regular rehearsals..." In an effort to further put lessons learned to practice, "the choir [pays] monthly visits to the Shoulder," a rehabilitation center in Houston, TX. The choir has also extended its charitable efforts to include inner-city youth by sponsoring four "Youth summits" and "Roundups" involving over 500 hundred youths. Charitable outreach, singing, and Bible study collectively help members to achieve their spiritual goals: "Above all," organizers agree, "the choir believes the Lord has given them a special ministry, a hunger for a deeper knowledge of his works, and a strong desire to do his will."62

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
Chapter 9: AAIPCs of the 1980s: The Best and Worst of Times

Once upon a time, there lived a young man and his wife. The young man had grown up in the church with a special understanding of God from the very beginning....The young lady had grown up with a father who was a very strong deacon. He really should have been a preacher, based on how we view preachers today...When they became of age, they fell in love....Weeks after their marriage, they decided to settle in Texas. The young man felt his call of God was somehow connected to that state...Their first stop was Dallas, and six months later they settled in a “small town in Texas.” After a three and a half years, the young man knew his destiny lay elsewhere. He felt the urge to move south. So acting upon this urge, they traveled to Houston. After one year of questions and soul-searching, the young man, his young wife and now their two children took the necessary steps to start a church.\(^1\)

With a few minor changes, Dr. Ed and Saundra Montgomery’s personal account rings familiar among many young AAIPC leaders who established ministries in Houston in the 1980s. Throughout the decade well into the 1990s, the Montgomeries along with an increasing number of young AAIPC ministers from various parts of the country founded churches in the Lone Star State. In 1985, Dr. Ed and Saundra Montgomery established Abundant Life Cathedral in the far west suburb of (Missouri City); Yale graduate Michael P. Williams established Joy Tabernacle first in Northeast Houston (59N at East Mount Houston), then in the east (I-10); Shelton Bady of Saginaw, Michigan founded Harvest Time in the north (Greenspoint Area); and Apostle A.S. Johnson, established his Back To God Revival in the southeast section of the city (610 at Telephone Rd.) Native Houstonian Ira V. Hilliard represents ministers of the Word-Faith movement; Reverend Gene Moore, the “Bapticosts,”\(^2\) and Kirbyjon Caldwell, the “Methocostals.”\(^3\) A little further southwest, David and Claudette Copeland of Buffalo,


\(^2\) Those who are fundamentally Baptist but welcome Pentecostal worship modalities, including the beliefs in Holy Spirit baptism and the gifts of the spirit.

\(^3\) Those who are fundamentally Methodist but welcome Pentecostal liturgical embellishments, including the beliefs in Holy Spirit baptism and the gifts of the spirit.
New York, entered the Texas AAIPC community via the U.S. Army in San Antonio, Texas, where they established New Creations Christian Fellowship.

Advanced educational degrees notwithstanding, none of the newcomers cited economic, social, or political reasons alone for their moves to Texas; the majority simply vowed that God led them here. Other reasons seemed to fall into place and thereby complement their foreordained spiritual missions. The modern theological bents of their collective approach suggested a fundamental belief in salvation through material progress or at least a warm fellowship between salvation and mutual success. While some in their generation placed their faith in the market place and scientific technology, others emphasized the Christian’s right to appreciate goods acquire through skill, patience, and hard work. With the influence of American capitalism well established among them, their churches became service oriented, replete with programs to attract and please the customer.

Where pre-civil rights African American Pentecostals emphasized a survivalist theology, one that was cautious of excess, post-civil rights African American Charismatics highlighted liberation in all aspects, the wallet included. Paris suggests, however, that both positions must be understood within the context of African American history.

Since survival is a necessary condition for social change, survival theology logically precedes liberation theology. Relative to biblical symbolism, the theology of the African American diaspora has centered more on the theology of the “wilderness” than on that of the “promised land.” Although the latter was always the source of African American political inspiration, its constant betrayal by their oppressors resulted in a destiny of dependency and deprivation instead of the desired freedom and equality. Consequently, the promised land has been viewed largely in eschatological terms while the pragmatic experience of coping with suffering and effecting some measure of incremental benefits preoccupied every dimension of African American life for several centuries.5

Succinctly, post-civil rights worshippers would not exist to enjoy "the promised land" had their ancestors not survived. Because modernism called for discarding the old and constructing the new, however, many young pastors of the era encouraged an indiscriminate forgetting. Few were willing to cherish cultural/political/spiritual/historical vestiges of the pre-civil rights era—dangerous given that many members of the black middle-class were still living on the edge of slippery socio-economic slope.  

Determined to move forward and stake their claims, modernist pastors brought with them crisp organizational skills and charisma, both natural and learned, in response to the contemporary focus on image and vitality. In a manner never before witnessed among Pentecostals in the Houston area, they welcomed the writer's pen and the photographer's flash. Newcomers also exuded a kind of "visible" zeal and fresh enthusiasm that young AAIPC churchgoers found irresistible. While native Houstonians continued to make progress, these firebrands entered the city without the burden of past loyalties. They found themselves perfectly positioned to capitalize on the glorious future that Houston promised all of its citizens, religious and secular alike. Combining Dr. Norman Peale's 1970s' message of positive thinking, its Charismatic counterpart, "Positive confession," and the finesse of Reverend Ike, young AAIPCs sought the

---

9 As many boomers lost their jobs due to the economic recession of the late 1980s, they learned that "faith" had many expressions. Christians needed faith not only to succeed, but also to endure unexpected difficult times.


4 The positive confession movement among Charismatics was initiated by Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948). Kenyon's ideas were wholeheartedly embraced by a number of popular televangelists including Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Capps, Frederick K. C. Price others. (See Stanley Burgess, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 719).

9 Reverend Ike, born Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter was a household name among black Americans of the 1970s. Of Dutch/Indian/black ancestry, by 1973 Reverend Ike had attracted thousands of followers in New York and 11/2 million members nationwide via his radio broadcasts in 27 states. While Reverend Ike established his United Church Science of Living Institute, Inc., in 1966, his popularity did not climax until the 1970s.

Reverend Ike initiated his preaching career when he was just 14 years old. For two years he was assistant pastor, then pastor of Bible Way Church in his hometown, Ridgeland, South Carolina. After attending divinity school for four years, Ike served two years as chaplain's assistant in the U.S. Air Force and then attended the American Bible College in Chicago. He eventually established United Church of
bigger, the better, the new and improved. Weary of suffering and its residue, they demanded prosperity now.

The spiritual cosmos mirrored the complexity of the populace in general. Class distinctions, interracial relations, and generational transformations challenged the idea of a black monolith. The multiple experiences of blacks in the U.S. led to a proliferation of theologies and competing narratives of God. Thus survivalist, liberationist, and modernist messages were simultaneously preached. Similar to the corporate response to diversification, ministries then became increasingly specialized as either “Healing Ministries,” (1900s-60s); “Faith/Prosperity,” (1970s-1980s); “Prophetic Ministries,” (1980s-1990s) etc. Given the forward-looking times, prophecy—the spiritual gift promising to provide access to the future—remained in great demand. The number of prophets exploded. Some genuine and others self-proclaimed. In Houston, Alfred Hinton of Muskogee, Oklahoma, captivated worshippers as he read private thoughts and concerns as if their lives were open books. Eddie B. Leadon, sister to W.L. Jennings of the Miracle House of Prayer, was sought after for her ability to give what Pentecostal-Charismatics called a “rhema”11 word. Almost any minister who focused on such existential issues as “destiny” and “purpose” drew large followings. Prophecies of peace and prosperity found a ready audience among blacks more than ready to realize the American dream.

Jesus Christ for All People, Inc., a storefront church in Boston. In 1966, Reverend Ike moved to New York and organized the Science of Living Institute in a Loew’s movie house on 175th street. It was from this local that Reverend Ike would capture his audiences with his message of positive thinking. According to Bob Lucas, “[t]he key to Reverend Ike’s success is not only that he looks like a winner but is able to convince others that they, too, can put the power of positive thinking to work for them.” Bob Lucas, “The Church of Here, Not the Hereafter.” Sepia (1973), 54-62.

10 Ministries seem to keep pace with the times and their prevalent needs. For example, while healing ministries are still popular, they experienced a veritable hey-day in the 1940s and 1950s; Faith/Prosperity, in 1970s-1980s; and Prophetic Ministries,” (1980s-present).

11The term “rhema” became very popular during the 1980s. Word-Faithers, intent on ensuring that they understood the exact meaning of scriptural language popularized finding the Greek translations biblical terms and phenomena. The “rhema” word is best described as a “fresh” word of enlightenent. A “right now” expression of the present will of God.
Determined to claim his "cattle upon a thousand hills," Dr. Ed Montgomery made one of the most dramatic entries into Houston's charismatic circles. Pastor and founder of Abundant Life Cathedral (Missouri, City), whose congregation now bulges at the seams with members of the black baby boomer generation, Montgomery and his wife, Saundra, started Abundant Life in August 1981 in a storefront at 5900 Allday, approximately five minutes from the church's current Harwin location. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Montgomery majored in religion at Bishop College in Dallas and worked as a gospel musician and assistant minister prior to moving to Houston.

Montgomery's embrace of nondenominational worship reflected a trend among a number of young men who aspired to ministry. Unlike second generation AAIPCs of Houston who largely pointed to black spiritual fathers, Montgomery and a growing number of young black Baptist ministers, particularly those who were new to the independent movement, sat under the tutelage of local and national white ministers. While among second generation AAIPCs Bishop H.W. Falls, J.L. Parker, and Leola Crawford along with other COGIC bishops would have been evoked in conversations about spiritual ancestry, Montgomery and many other young post-civil rights Houstonians of the cloth sought guidance elsewhere. Names like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and John Osteen (all three white) were invoked among. This trend may have resulted from at least two factors. Traditional black Pentecostals criticized materialistic approaches to Christianity. New Charismatics tended to associate black Pentecostals with super spirituality. Yet as Ed Montgomery's account below suggests, the difference between the worship styles of non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals was not always obvious:

I grew up in a semitraditional black Baptist church. I say semitraditional because black Baptist churches differ in certain parts of the country. I was raised in one that had good singing, a loud, spirited organ, fiery preaching, a

---

12 "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Psalm 50:10)
lot of hand clapping and heavy foot stomping. When I finally visited a quiet Baptist church, I really wasn’t sure what I was!

As I grew older, I sensed the call of God to the ministry. It was assumed by my family, friends and even myself that I would one day become pastor of a Baptist church, and I did. But there were always the seeds of unlimited possibilities planted deep inside me. As I studied the Bible, I began to realize that there were no such things as denominations. Jesus was not coming back for a Baptist church, a Methodist church, a Pentecostal church or even a Christian center! Jesus was coming back for the Church. But what was the Church? I knew it had to be more than a building.”¹⁴

A beautiful place of worship was not out of the question. Montgomery and his congregation unveiled their $2 million-dollar, 2000-seat sanctuary in the fall of 1992. Abundant Life offered the variety of worship choices and programs that sociologists say appeals to baby-boomers in search of spiritual renewal. While the church sponsored a child development center, a TV ministry, outreach programs, a men’s fellowship, a youth ministry, a citywide network of more than fifty small women’s groups, and diverse Christian education opportunities, Montgomery insisted that worship remained central. “Our church is about worship in every aspect,” Ed Montgomery stated. “We’ve finally focused and realized what our niche is. We are calling people to worship, not just going to church, but becoming the church. We’re calling them back to worship, not merely to a place of entertainment, but to a place where every gift and every talent, all the energies are drawn into focus, and you are worshipping God.”¹⁵

Abundant Life and the Montgomeries also earned national respect in the early 1990s. They were involved in the International Congress of Churches, National Religious Broadcasters, Charismatic Bible Ministries, and other organizations. Both have authored popular Christian books and articles, guest hosted Pat Robertson’s “The 700 Club” religious program, and appeared on various Christian programs. Abundant Life was also

¹⁴ Montgomery, 158.
¹⁵ Ibid.
featured in a cover story on black Charismatics in the November 1990 issue of Charisma magazine.

**Michael P. Williams:**

Entering with equally as much thunder was Pastor Michael P. Williams of Joy Tabernacle (Northeast Houston/East Houston). A graduate of Yale Divinity School and Baptist bred, Michael had come to Houston as pastor of Houston’s historic Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. But he was soon asked to resign when he attempted to share his Pentecostal awakening with the very traditional congregation there. Young Baptists who appreciated his approach accompanied Williams and his newly founded Joy Tabernacle to northeast Houston (E. Mount Houston near Hirsch) and later to East Houston (I-10 at Baca).

Known not only for his intellect but for his audacity as well, Williams remains perhaps one of the most verbally prolific AAIPC pastors in the area. Because he is a student of history, local media pundits have sought Williams’s opinion on myriad issues including the historic visit of the Reverend Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam at Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church (Fifth Ward) in 1994, the release of Spike Lee’s Malcolm X, and the plight of young black men.

**Shelton Bady:**

In the northern corner of the city (Greenspoint), on Veteran’s Memorial Road, Pastor Shelton Bady and his Harvest Time Evangelist Center (the Harvest) constitute yet another example of the vibrancy that accompanies newcomers. Harvest Time is a thriving church of young people, median age twenty-nine. Like many independent ministries, the Harvest was planned in a home. Unlike a host of others, the first service convened at the Wyndham Greenspoint, a five-star hotel, an emblem of Bady’s

---

preference for life’s finest.\textsuperscript{19} Different from pastors of the pre-civil rights era, Bady and young pastors of the 1980s believed that the days suffering and small things had passed. Benefiting from post-civil-right opportunities afforded young black men of his generation, Bady nurtured the probability of his success via business and interpersonal skills acquired through undergraduate education at Michigan State University and graduate training at the University of Texas at Austin. His managerial skills were further honed during his tenure as a sales representative for the Dial Corporation.

Although Bady valued the benefits of education and excellence in achievement, neither of the two daunted his appreciation for a good, “sanctified shout.” Reared in a COGIC church in Saginaw Michigan, he and a growing number of young accomplished Pentecostal-Charismatic worshippers rejected the notion that ecstatic praise and educational decorum were at odds with each other. Often unknown to co-workers, bosses, supervisors, and employees, some of these new-and-improved saints thought nothing of praying discreetly in their “prayer language” (tongues) during coffee breaks or of carrying scented anointed oil in leather brief cases to cast out an occasional devil and/or to “bind the works of the flesh” (e.g., strife, envy, malice, etc.). They seemed determined to prove that black Pentecostals could have their cake and eat it too.

Bady whetted his natural ability to mobilize young people while still in Saginaw and at the University of Texas where he served as the second president of Harambee,\textsuperscript{20} an off-shoot of the Baptist Student Union designed to reach black students on predominantly white campuses. Even though Harambee chapters existed on other campuses in the Southwest, including Sam Houston State, Lamar, and North Texas State Universities, the U.T. Harambee group remained stood out among them for its spiritual

\textsuperscript{19} Bady received his ordination papers from Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, founding pastor of the Latter Day Revival Center, 4036 Lyons Ave. He is also the son-in-law of Apostle A.S. Johnson. (See Chapters 8 and 11 for more on Johnson).

\textsuperscript{20} Kimberly Kossie of Houston, Texas, was the first president of Harambee. Kossie’s highschool classmate, Yolanda (Rutledge) Jarmon, headed Harambee’s evangelism outreach. With the moral support of white BSU (Baptist Students Union) officers Joe Parnell and Kathryn Boggs, Kossie and Rutledge put their oratory skills and charisma to good use. By the time Shelton Bady was elected president of Harambee the following year, 1986, the organization boasted some eighty members.
dynamism. While the Pentecostal flavor of the U.T. group repelled some, it drew others who not only grew to love singing with their peers but praying and “churching” with them as well. Marriages, ministries, and lasting friendships resulted from these charismatic meetings at the University of Texas.

Having established contacts with Kimberly Kossie, Yolanda (Rutledge) Jarmon, and other Pentecostal-Charismatic students while attending the University of Texas, Pastor Bady discovered that the Bayou City was ripe for harvest. A businessman at heart, Bady dared not establish “The Harvest” without foresight and planning. He initiated an important period of spiritual/organizational gleaning. I.V. Hilliard’s New Light and Jesse Dunn’s Greenspoint Family Worship Center were among the congregations where Bady assisted prior to starting his church. History affirms that Bady has done well. Within two years, “The Harvest” reaped some 800 members. Bady’s accomplishments notwithstanding, he treasures “the ability to be humble” as his outstanding characteristic.  

**Carlos Pierrott and Harvest Time (Southside):**

The son of a traditional Pentecostal preacher, Reverend Lloyd Pierrott, Sr., Carlos Pierrott established his church “Harvest Time” after a brief tenure at Houston’s well-known Windsor Village United Methodist Church. With Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees Prairie View A & M University, and a resume that includes the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) among Pierrott’s list of former employers, the young minister brought unique skills to his growing church. One of his members recalled that while “he and his wife were raised in the old school, they [are] not steeped in tradition.” Pierrott’s description fits that of many children of the saints who, while being committed

---

22 Pastor Lloyd Pierrott, Sr., was a longstanding member of Bishop H. W. Falls’s (Zion Temple, Fourth Ward) Worldwide Fellowship. Pierrott’s church is located in Huntsville, TX.
23 Karen Kossie, Field Notes: an appreciation service for Pastor and Sister Pierrott held February 22, 1998, Holiday Inn (Kirby location), Houston, TX.
to the principles of holiness and sanctification, are more comfortable in the contemporary world than their parents may have been.

**The Bapticsosts:**

As African Americans grew to understand that their predilection for emotional worship was not solely a Pentecostal phenomenon, nor a sign of cultural backwardness, a number of newcomers to the Charismatic experience opted to maintain organizational ties with the greater Baptist church. In popular church culture, such Baptists are often referred to as “Bpticosts.” Reverend Gene Moore (St. Agnes Baptist Church) and Bishop Larry D. Leonard, Sr., (Morning Star Baptist Church) represent this group in Houston. Evincing the historical tendency among many black Christians to migrate from one denomination to another and from generation to other, Tony Martin of New Orleans, Louisiana, the leader of “Bpticostal” movement in the Southwest, is the son of a COGIC bishop.

**The Methocostals:**

The history of “Methocostals” is concurrent that of “Bpticosts” although Methodist churches with Pentecostal/Charismatic inclinations point to different origins. 24 According to Beverly Hall Lawrence’s work *Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African Americans Goes Home to Church*, 25 many young Methodist pastors grew to embrace charismatic worship styles upon learning that spirited worship was universal among blacks. Houston’s popular Windsor Village United Methodist Church is experimenting with this new tradition. Quite different from traditional Methodism, members fast, shout, take victory laps around the sanctuary, and participate in a number of other spiritual modalities uniquely associated with the black Pentecostal church in the early-to-mid twentieth century.

**COGIC Strides in Houston:**

---

24 “Holiness” as a movement derived from Wesleyan Methodism, although often used interchangeably with the word “pentecostal.”

Under the jurisdiction of State Bishop N. H. Henderson and State Mother Eloise Law, COGIC churches in Houston experienced tremendous growth as well. Woodard Cathedral, located in Third Ward, and the State Temple on Camay Street in northeast Houston mirrored COGIC’s period of prosperity in the bayou city. Many of the city’s most influential black Pentecostals attended the cathedral, including gospel soloist Sarah Jordan Powell.26 As an indication of the prominence of Woodard Cathedral, Houston Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire attended the Cathedral’s dedication ceremonies.

**COGIC Strides in California:**

One of the most celebrated COGIC congregations in the nation is linked to the southwest via Emma Frances Crouch of Texas27—West Angeles COGIC, where Bishop Charles E. Blake pastors a thriving church and presides over 250 COGIC churches in California.28 In 1969, when Blake was twenty seven years old, he was assigned to the church by Bishop Samuel Crouch,29 Sr., uncle of gospel singer Andraé Crouch, the nephew of the late Emma Crouch. Since Blake’s appointment, West Angeles has grown from 50 members to 17,000, making it one of the fastest growing churches in the nation.30 Because of the congregation’s phenomenal increase in membership, Bishop Blake has planned for the construction of a $40 million dollar project to accommodate the church’s 80 community ministries.31

Although West Angeles is located in inner-city South Central Los Angeles, the church continues to attract an impressive array of black cultural icons including musical genius Steve Wonder, Oscar-winning Denzel Washington (the son of the COGIC preacher in New York); film producer/actor Robert Townsend;32 actress Vesta Williams,33 who

---

26 Powell, the daughter of a COGIC pastor, is a longtime favorite among Houston gospel music lovers. She was particularly well known in the 1970s for her rare soprano voice.
29 Crouch is related to former COGIC National Supervisor Emma Crouch of San Antonio, Texas.
30 Ibid., 39.
31 Ibid., 39.
32 Ibid., 40.
33 Ibid.
played in *Posse* with actor Mario Van Peebles; Akosua Busia, who starred with Whoopi Goldberg in the *Color Purple*, and former Los Angeles Laker, Irving 'Magic' Johnson.

**National AAIPC Ministers:**

**Dr. Fred K.C. Price:**

"To many he may seem arrogant and cold on television, but he is a man of great compassion, love, faith and courage.""36

Among African Americans, Dr. Fred K.C. Price remains the most widely known proponent of the Word-Faith gospel, a theological position based Essek William Cannon’s doctrine “positive confession.”37 The only black minister listed among the top national evangelists in 1991, Price’s “Ever-Increasing Faith” has ranked among the top 15 syndicated religious programs for years.39 Price’s popularity soared when he and his congregation obtained a permit to construct the Crenshaw Christian Center, a 10,000-seat sanctuary in South Los Angeles.40 Price and his affluent 13,000-member congregation purchased the land where Pepperdine University once stood. After the Cultural Heritage Commission’s fruitless albeit earnest attempts to preserve the historical “Conally House,” (the President’s House although the presidents of the university did not reside there), Price moved forward with his plans to construct what would become one of the largest black churches in the country.41

34 Ibid, 115.
35 *Charisma Magazine*, April 1998
37 Some refer to “positive confession” theory as “name-it-and-claim-it” theology. As stated earlier, the positive confession movement among Charismatics was initiated by Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948). Kenyon’s ideas were wholeheartedly embraced by a number of popular televangelists including Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Capps, Frederick K. C. Price others. (See Stanley Burgess, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 719).
38 It must be noted, however, that ratings within the black community and national ratings may yield different results. A black minister who is popular among whites may not necessarily be popular among blacks.
41 Ibid., 3.
Price’s claim to fame did not occur without controversy. D.R. McConnell, a former ORU theology instructor whose 1988 book *A Different Gospel* chronicles the faith movement, said Price’s 1980 visit to ORU caused a furor among the faculty. “Price was in the homiletical habit of interspersing within his sermon rhetorical questions to the audience, such as ‘Am I right?’ or ‘Do you believe it?’ Many of the ORU students wholeheartedly agreed with Price, but tension mounted within the seminary faculty during Price’s week of messages in regard to his radical stance on “healing” McConnell wrote. “When in his chapel sermon, Price asked loudly, ‘It’s not God who heals you, it’s your faith!...Do you believe it?’ one frustrated seminary professor couldn’t remain silent any longer and shouted out equally loudly, ‘No!’ Jumping up from his seat on the platform, President Oral Roberts immediately demanded and received an apology from the professor in question, but it was obvious from the subsequent reaction of the seminary faculty and many of the students that the professor’s ‘negative confession’ had answered for many more than himself on that day.”42

Reflecting his direct, no-nonsense approach and dedication to bigness, when one woman attending his newly established national fellowship of 210 urban churches confided that her congregation had fluctuated between 10 and 125 people over the last fifteen years, Price affirmed his belief that “every church should be a big church.” He further added that “if results are not coming, it is possible you are not giving out the Word [correctly] or that God has not called you, anointed you, to pastor.”43

Despite Price’s controversial approach to faith, he served as a powerful mentor to a growing number of young independent pastors throughout the nation and the Southwest. Reverend Daniel A. Fernandez’s case is one such example. Formerly affiliated with a Pentecostal denomination, When Fernandez started his independent congregation—Christian Faith-Center in Montebello, California—with only a “handful” of people. By 1991, three years later, his church boasted 250 members. In Houston,

Texas area such as I.V. Hilliard and Ed Montgomery, both of whom support Price’s teachings and view of emotive worship. I.V. Hilliard’s New Light Church, 11240 Crown Park Drive near Greenspoint Mall, sponsored Price’s 1988 visit to Houston.  

Of recent, Price gained attention for his bold sermon series on racism in the church. Price purportedly confronted Kenneth Hagin, Sr., Price’s mentor, about Hagin’s son’s taped assertion that “we ought to mix any of the races.” Although Hagin, Jr. apologized, Price argued that “Hagin’s apologies [fell] short because he refuse[d]to recant his view that it is acceptable for Christian parents to discourage interracial marriage.”

**Carlton Pearson:**

Carlton Pearson, of Higher Dimensions Ministries, Tulsa OK, represented the most well-rounded generation of traditional black Pentecostals that the country has ever seen. Starting his church in 1981 in a storefront gathering of 75 people, by 1984 Pearson’s “Higher D” had become a multifaceted ministry of more than 3,000 members.

For African Americans AAIPCs, traditionally more Pentecostal than Charismatic, Pearson provided an alternative to the mostly didactic approach of many Word Faithers. One of the most influential Southwestern preachers of this generation, Pearson was reared in Bishop Blake’s West Angeles COGIC. He later pursued ministerial training at Oral Roberts University. During his undergraduate years there, Founder Oral Roberts and Evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman were Pearson’s spiritual mentors. Unlike many “Word-Fathers” who often derided the black Pentecostal past, Carlton praised his humble Pentecostal roots and often gave homage to saints of previous generations, highlighting their tenacity despite extraordinary circumstances. Although criticized by whites and blacks, Pearson insisted on the integrity of African American worship styles while

---

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
rejecting the racially exclusive theological teachings of some Afrocentric ministries. Proud of his identity, young, witty, intelligent, and anointed, Carlton Pearson influenced an entire generation of young African American AAIPCs. Both interdenominational and interracial, his Azusa Conference draws some ten thousand people from throughout the country and world to the Maybe Center at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma.49

Other Positive Changes: Stars Who Touched the "Son"

The success of local and national evangelists and pastors indicated that favorable economic times had begun to visit a young, bustling black middle class. The overall positive mood among Christians of the Southwest was further reinforced by a dramatic increase in the number of African-American celebrities who publicly claimed Charismatic experiences. Many lent their support to anti-drug efforts then blanketing cities throughout the nation. In Houston, August 1987, former Rocket John Lucas, then a recovering substance abuser and born-again Christian, gave an anti-drug abuse lecture at Greater New Grove Missionary Baptist Church, 7311 E. Mount Houston Road in Northeast Houston.50 A year later, Robert Reid acted as a spokesperson for Say No to Drugs campaigns in Houston and San Antonio, his home town.51 Reed’s newfound spirituality even prompted him to give up his basketball career temporarily to help a family member in ministry. The salvation of star athlete Elvin Hayes (Louisiana) was equally appreciated. Hayes experienced conversion at Bishop J.L. Parker’s Bible Way Church of Holiness in Houston’s Trinity Gardens52 and worshipped there for a short while.

49 Pastor Shelton Bady of the bustling Harvest Time admits being influenced by Carlton’s example. A Michigander by birth and graduate from the University of Texas’s M.B.A. program, Pastor Bady mounted a relentless strive for excellence in educational, managerial, and ecclesial achievement. Before officially starting Harvest Time in meeting rooms at the Wyndham Greenspoint Hotel, Bady had begun a quick move up the corporate ladder of the Dial Corporation. Full of energy and not prone to defeat, Bady commenced his church in the newly thriving Greenspoint area, one that has become increasingly popular among young African American professionals.

50 Staff, “Collection Plate,” Houston Chronicle, August 22, 1987, p. 3.


Continuing the trend, the salvation and subsequent call to ministry of Houston’s first boxing champion, George Foreman, boosted saints’ long-standing conviction that “the power of God was real.” After losing a 1977 match to Jimmy Young, Foreman claimed to have had a vision of death and God.53 “I was in the dressing room after the Jimmy Young fight, walking around and cooling off. I thought the lost wasn’t any big thing, but then a thought slipped in. ‘You might as well die.’ I tried to shake it off, but I kept hearing that voice. I could feel life slipping away from me. Then I fought everybody in that room to get into the showers so I could baptize myself in the name of Jesus. God called on me to preach.”54 Following his return to Houston, Foreman began to share his testimony with congregations throughout the city. The impact of the ex-heavyweight champion’s story of salvation took the black community by storm. So, too, did other steps Foreman took because of his beliefs.

Determined to ensure that his life mirrored the definition of Christianity championed by the church he frequented, Foreman sold his homes in Beverly Hills, CA, and Houston. He even parted with some of the vehicles he had collected over the years. Although he still continued to relax at his 200 acre ranch near Marshall, TX, he eventually began to dedicate more time to Houston’s inner-city youths. In 1984, he and his brother Roy founded the George Foreman Youth and Community center in an effort to keep participating young men away from the temptations of the streets.55

Even while Foreman enjoyed his life in the Lone Star state, his love for boxing began to resurface. Despite his thirty-seven years, Foreman reentered the ring and eventually made history—he became the heavyweight champion of the world after defeating Evander Holyfield, also a dedicated Christian. After his victory, Foreman continued to uphold his religious commitment and to work with the young men whose lives his center touched. Saints throughout the city, regardless of their brand of

54 Cited in Nash, 41.
55 Ibid., 42.
Pentecostalism-Charismaticism, appreciated the overall positive image of Christianity that Foreman provided.

**The Religious Media:**

Unlike any other period in the AAIPC movement, the 1980s were years continued expansion and progress in Christian communities throughout the nation. Television ministries such as Jim Baker’s PTL, the 700 Club, and Paul and Jan Crouch’s Praise the Lord traveled the airwaves into the homes of millions of Americans. Although geographically dispersed throughout the sprawling Houston metropolis, Houston’s Black church-loving community remained electronically united through television, radio, and the printed media. Numerous media sources chronicled the history of Houston Area African American Pentecostal-Charismatics, including *Gospel Monthly Magazine*, (established in 1982), *The Houston Chronicle*, KTSU’s Gospel Sunday, KWWJ (established in 1988), KJOJ, and, to a lesser extent, KSBJ, the Channel 14 (A TBN affiliate established in 1973) and Channel 22.

Given the multiplicity of programs, preaching and teaching styles filling the airways, TBN, now the world’s largest religious television network, had the greatest influence on African American religious communities throughout city and nation. It provided AAIPC Christians of the Southwest with a banquet table of liturgical possibilities that continue to reshape the AAIPC theosphere. As Paul Crouch sought to diversify programming, an increasing number of African-American ministers were invited for interviews or asked to help conduct programs. In Houston, Barbara Guthrie served as station manager of Channel 14, and during her tenure, a number of AAIPCs were

---

56 Trinity Broadcasting Network recently signed an agreement with EchoStar Communications Corporation, which will carry TBN on its Digital Sky Highway (dish) Network. Based in Tustin, CA, TBN will be able to reach beyond existing cable and off-air broadcast audience with the addition of the direct broadcast satellite technology. On the air twenty-four hours a day, TBN is currently carried on 3,830 cable systems, 40 full-power stations in major markets, and 350 low-power stations. The EchoStar dish package includes 50 channels for twenty dollars per month plus $600.00 for an 18-inch satellite dish. For more information see J. Gordon Melton, Phillip Charles Lucas. et al, *Prime-Time Religion: An Encyclopedia of Religious Broadcasting* (Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1997) 353—357.

57 *Christianity Today*, October 2, 1995, p. 94.
introduced to local and national television audiences. Earl Allen and Dorothy Washington became regular program hosts for the Houston Area, while various others, such as Michael P. Williams, conducted interviews periodically.

Radio:

KTsu’s Gospel Sunday program was among media sources bridging Houston’s black gospel community. Corliss A. Rabb, an impressive pacesetter, made an indelible mark on black churchgoers who tuned in regularly to her program on Sunday mornings. Because of her rich voice, commanding enunciation, and presence, Corliss A. Rabb became a role-model for young black men and women throughout the state of Texas who aspired to pursue careers in radio broadcasting. When concerts were performed throughout the city, Rabb drew as many participants as did the artists themselves. When T.S.U. changed its format, and Rabb pursued other avenues, Darrell Martin’s KWWJ (Gospel 1360-AM) proceeded to fill the void.

“Moved by faith,” businessman Darrell E. Martin and a group of investors established KWWJ in September, 1988. Formerly KBUK for approximately 40 years, KWWJ is situated at 4630 Decker Drive in Baytown, Texas, and reaches listeners in Greater Houston area including LaPorte, Pasadena, Clear Lake, LaMarque, Texas City, Galveston, Port Arthur and Beaumont. Martin, general manager and president of Salt of the Earth Corporation, which oversees the daily operations of the station, is also owner of Darrell Martin Insurance Agency, 3124 Tidwell. After nurturing his interests in radio at Texas Southern University’s 90.9 FM station, he purchased the station.

Within two years, Martin’s KWWJ gained the Number 23 spot in the Arbitron ratings. The fall following, KWWJ surpassed long-standing black stations KYOK (1590-AM) and KCOH. Jeff Sleete, vice-president and general manager of KYOK, attributed the stations' success to the KWWJ’s having tapped into the religious core of Houston’s black communities. African American Houstonians, he stated, “...appreciate church

---

music as they attend religious ceremonies or when they are at home.” Martin’s perseverance helped to verify that “black people do listen to gospel music and they are supporters of gospel music.”\textsuperscript{59} He also rightly concluded that “Gospel listeners are very loyal. They are not the type that switches [sic] the dial, because they are listening to something they really believe in.”\textsuperscript{60}

Beyond inviting national gospel greats such as Shirley Caesar and the Winans, and showcasing local artists of national repute—including Beau Williams, V. Michael McKay and Redeemed, Cedric Taylor, Ed Johnson and Praise, the Rev. Paul Jones, New Community Mass Choir Greater St. Matthew’s Baptist Choir, Yolanda Adams, Anointed and Kim Burrell—Martin’s station also provides a forum for local pastors to share their ministries with the community. Unlike listener-supported KSBJ, KWWJ sells air time to local and national pastors, ministries, and commercial advertisers. It also benefits from the multifaceted contributions of volunteer radio announcers. Affectionately named “The Home of Inspiration and Praise,” the station’s popularity is evidenced by a proliferation of bumper stickers on vehicles throughout the area.\textsuperscript{61}

Until an overemphasis on politics preach via by nationally syndicated columnists Cal Thomas and Phyllis Schafley made many black listeners feel unwelcome as the 1980s progressed, KSBJ FM 89.3, a 100,000 watt non-commercial FM station which blankets the Greater Houston, gained young black listeners with its contemporary gospel music. Popular songs such as “Cosmic Cowboy” signaled exciting new directions in Christian music. In an effort to reach a more diverse listening audience, nearly a decade later, KSBJ hired Kimberly Kossie, former Director of Spiritual Life for Houston’s cherished Star of Hope Mission. Having served on the board of KSBJ prior to joining the station, Kossie currently directs the station’s “Life Without Walls” campaign, one designed to foster opportunities for interdenominational and interracial cooperation.

\textsuperscript{59} Cited in Vara, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
The Making of Books:

In addition to the media exposure available to AAIP-Cs of the 1980s, African-American Independent Pentecostal-Charismatics also experienced an intellectual revival. The decade witnessed an unprecedented era of evangelical book publishing and cassette distribution. Between 1970 and 1980, the retail growth in the Christian Booksellers’ Association was tenfold, a veritable literary explosion.\textsuperscript{62} Ministers throughout the country printed their particular formulas for salvation, healing, and financial success. Charismatics Conferences, tapes, books, magazines, bible colleges, Word churches, plays, musical productions, and concerts flourished as well.

In Houston, Texas, \emph{Gospel Monthly Magazine} played a commanding roll by providing a literary outlet for established and aspiring writers, poets, counselors, pastors, and evangelists. Earl Allen (Miracleland Church), Paul Cannings (Living Word Fellowship Church), Kenneth and Cynthia Skelton (Spirit of Life Church), Dorothy Washington (Good News Church), Amos York (First Mount Zion Church) submitted the following serial newsletters to Houston’s \emph{Gospel Monthly Magazine} for publication: “Health, Wealth and Happiness,” Earl Allen; Urban Ministry,” Paul Cannings; “Lifelines For Marriages,” Kenneth and Cynthia Skelton; “Healing for the Hurting,” Dorothy Washington; and “The Horn of Our Salvation,” Amos York. In the 1990s, many of their musings would be transformed into book-length manuscripts.

1980s: The Worst of Times

While the 1980s constituted a decade of positive, even monumental growth for some AAIP-Cs of the Southwest, they were filled with anxiety for others, especially for those who lived or pastored churches in economically depressed areas of town. Demonstrating the gradual separation of African-American “haves” from “have nots,” by 1980 more than 31 percent of African-Americans lived in poverty, nearly three times the percentage of impoverished whites. Six years later, 14 percent of African-American

families earned less than $5000 a year, compared with 9.6 percent in 1970, and more than 30 percent had a yearly income of less than $10,000.

At the same time, an economic gulf began to divide the African-American community. Offering their solution to the problem, a small but increasingly vocal group of black conservatives gained national attention with spirited exposes criticizing the social programs and affirmative action policies of the 1960s. With the blessings of the Reagan Administration, they displayed their hard-earned pieces of the American dream. Melvin Bradley, a special assistant to President Reagan for policy development and public liaison, Professor Shelby Steele, author of *Content of Our Character*, economist William Julius Wilson and others touted individualism and conservatism as sure avenues to progress. Mirroring this trend, Harvard University Professor of Political Economy Glenn Loury argued for more “personal responsibility” among blacks and less dependency upon the government and white liberal guilt for social advancement. Having perfected the conservative position by the 1990s, Bertha Gilkey warned her audience in St. Louis, Missouri: “There’s no black knight to save you. There’s no white knight to save you. There’s no Latino knight to save. You have to save yourself!” 63 She further argued that African Americans had “become victims of a system that promotes poverty pimps.”64

Even though black conservatives and the administration argued that Reagonomics would preserve a “safety net” to keep the truly poor and unfortunate from destitution and that economic growth would benefit all Americans, the reverse occurred. While the economy did rebound, most of the new jobs available to young “baby-boomers” were low-paying. By 1990 far more Americans proportionally worked in fast food restaurants and supermarkets at a few dollars an hour than in steel mills and auto plants at $20 per hour as many had a decade before. Adult children could not expect on average to

---


63 Ibid., I, 16.
exceed their parents’ income: a major component of the American Dream faded with increasing rapidity.

Among affluent Americans of every ethnic persuasion, the picture was considerably brighter. By 1988, the top five percent of income receivers were paying a far smaller proportion of their income as taxes than before 1980. More important than tax breaks was the sheer size of the income explosion amount top earners. Between the late 1970s and late 1980s the number of millionaires in the United States doubled. By late 1988 Forbes magazine counted fifty-two billionaires.

Members of the black middle class, especially women, continued to make educational, political, social, and economic strides throughout the country. In Texas, State Representative Karyne Conley was first elected to the Texas House of Representatives from Bexar County in 1988. Slicing their piece of the American Pie in Dallas, TX, Annette Hamilton and her husband, Bill, founded Annette 2 Cosmetiques in 1982 which grew into a multi-million-dollar business in ten years. Louise Martin, the first black member of the Southwestern Photographers Convention, ran a successful portrait studio in Houston for almost forty years. Brenda P. Kennedy began serving as the judge of the Travis County Court-at-Law # 7 in 1987; Dionne Phillips Bagsby became the first black woman in Texas to win a position as a county commissioner, in Tarrant County in 1988; as Texas secretary of state, appointed in 1984, Myra McDaniel was the first black ever to call a Texas House of Representatives opening session to order (January 15, 1985); and Hazel Obey, a former member of the Democratic National Committee, headed the Texas Rainbow Coalition which supported the presidential candidacy of the Reverend Jesse Jackson in 1988.

---

Middle-class African American males of the diaspora also experienced generally positive gains. Members of the black intelligentsia, Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, and Julius Lester enjoyed an increasing number of speak engagements on campuses throughout the nation. For the first time, an African American novelist, Toni Morrison, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Literature. Joining in the black females call for equality, Derrick Bell protested the Harvard Law School's failure to hire a black woman law professor. African novelist Wole Soyinka was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for literature. And Jesse Jackson successfully negotiated the release of hostages in Iran. He also became the first African American to seriously run for the presidency.

The calls for and/or responses to conservativism/republicanism among Christians manifested themselves differently in black and white cultural milieus. Members of the largely white New Right lamented the rise in divorce, the increased assertiveness of feminists and gays, the spread of pornography, and the increasing availability of abortion, they tended to view illegitimacy, the proliferation of drugs, and the breakdown of the family as culturally determined and geographically bound, i.e., they were non-white and inner-city.

Just Americans adopted the republican platform for reasons that were economic, social, and cultural, so too did Christians. For many white Christians who sought cultural unity, i.e., "one nation under God," the terms "multiculturalism" and "pluralism" were negatively perceived. While white evangelical forefathers of the earlier decades contented themselves to combat the forces of Evil through revivals, Sunday sermons, and altar calls, members of the New Right became increasingly politicized. Their efforts culminated in the formation of the Moral Majority in 1979. Under the leadership of the Reverend Jerry Falwell, a Baptist minister of Roanoke, Virginia, the Moral Majority vowed to fight for federal laws to restrict abortion and check the spread of crime, pornography, and drugs, and to seek the reversal of court rulings against prayer in the public schools. However ardent their call for righteousness, to many African Americans—traditional
Democrats—the largely white, Republican New Right remained an unattractive option, for too often the New Right’s analysis of what ailed America left blacks to blame. The inner-city poor suffered most from such attitudes which resulted in further alienation, separation, and despair.

In a defiant mood fueled by hard economic times and the hypocrisy of many American Christians, post-Christian inner-city teens responded in destructive ways. They turned highways into war zones and hedges into little shops horror. Among young African Americans, Rap told the story that statistics affirmed. African-American youths faced the bleakest prospects of all. The percentage of African-American males under 24 who had never been employed rose from 9.9 percent in 1966 to 23.3 percent in 1977. By 1987, more than 34 percent of African-American teens were unemployed, compared to 17 percent of white teens, and more than 21 percent of African-Americans between the ages of 20 and 24 remained jobless, compared to less than 10 percent of their white counterparts. Five years later, nearly 40 percent of African-American teens and 24 percent of African-Americans in their early 20s found themselves without work. Many of the poor, unemployed youths lived in single-parent single-income households often headed by a mother. In 1964, roughly 25 percent of African-American children lived in female-headed households. Conduced by a welfare system that inadvertently rewarded fatherless families, in 1980 the figure increased to 40 percent. In 1984, the number of female-headed, single-parent African-American families skyrocketed to more than 50 percent, compared to 14 percent among white families. By 1992, the figure had increased to 59 percent among African-Americans. With plenty of unstructured time, little money, and less parental care than children in two-parent families, many inner-city African-American youths sought to fill emotional and economic voids with “crack,” an inexpensive albeit more addictive form of the rich man’s drug of choice—cocaine.72

Conservative Christians blamed their plight on liberalism gone array and the deterioration of the black family. No doubt, it was a time to find some real answers.

**Responses:**

Despite the need for genuine solutions, religious communities and churches became increasingly narcissistic in their approach to Christianity. Reverend Dr. James Forbes, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, argued that both liberal and conservative churches turned inward to take care of themselves rather than society at large. Linking spiritual narcissism in the church to growing ethnocentrism and conservatism, Forbes argued that dollars had become the bottom line. Suffering from a “secular mentality,” the Christian church of the 1980s had lost “the capacity to experience the transcendent.” Worse still, “[t]he spirit of our age in the culture at large probably [had] more impact on religious institutions than the other way around.”

Given the church’s insular mood, the more aggressive spiritual call to “go out into the highways and hedges and compel men” remained largely unanswered. Because prosperity and progress were prioritized in such ministries, the poor no longer received attention. As ministers increasingly suggested that one’s economic status mirrored one’s spiritual state, prosperity and wealth were equated with godliness and poverty, the blight of sin. According to their dollar-based analysis, if America’s poor had not made it by now, when countless Asian and Caribbean immigrants had, surely only they were to blame for their lack of initiative and success. Opting not to be their brothers’ keepers, many national evangelists turned away from the problems plaguing America’s inner cities and directed their soul-saving energies to the “utmost parts of the earth”—Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Without ever having initiated earnest love campaigns at home, they opted to spread their charity abroad.

As the gulf between the black middle and underclasses widened, and white furor increased, the black response to the conservative times took an intriguing turn. Students

---

and professionals of the African Diaspora integrated white campuses and corporate structures deduced from their marginalization that the nation’s institutions—educational and financial—were bastions of non-inclusive thought and practice. Mounting frustrations among African American manifested themselves in a variety of ways across denominational and geographical boundaries, disciplines, and areas of specialization. The “white man’s” proverbial sugar grew less sweet by the decade.

By the 1980s Cone’s liberationist interpretation had arrested the attention of a growing number of young black theologians, academicians, ethno-musicologists, and psychologists, many of whom had come to address the lack of theoretical frameworks that took African American, Afro-Caribbean, or African perspectives into account. Black intellectuals argued that traditional Eurocentric theories muted the full articulation of Diasporic perspectives across the disciplines.

The re-examination and re-articulation of workable frameworks that Cone initiated in the 1970s continued to entertain questions about American spirituality. Given the national focus on the nation’s youth, most affected by the turbulent times, in 1985 conversations among eleven professors of religious education led to a conclusion that churches and theological schools had given only limited attention to the experiences of ethnic youth in general and of African American youth in particular. In their collective inquiry they discovered that among the scarce few sources in which African American youth were the focus, “most of the assumptions informing ministries with African American youth had been drawn from the experiences of predominantly white churches.”74 Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministries (a collection of essays, editors, Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Shockley) resulted from their investigation. Contributing writer, Jacquelyn Grant drew the following from the tenets of black liberationist theology:

---

The movement from object to subject is a movement in the process of empowerment. Black theology facilitates this movement. No longer is the white experience the set of spectacles through which we evaluate the black experience.”

Interest in the movement toward spiritual legitimization found further expression in the writings of Janice Hale-Benson. Hale-Benson began to trace the problems that black youths face in secular and Christian educational systems due to the residual forces of colonization and oppression. She noted that “[r]egardless of where it is found—American, African, the Caribbean—the system achieves the same end: exploiting the labor power and resources of the colonized.” Thus American educational and religious systems, both born of colonialist ideals, inherently foster “structured inequality.”

Holding that “black children do not enter school disadvantaged,” but rather that [t]hey emerge from school as disadvantaged youth,” Hale-Benson contended that the “church must evaluate its ministries to black youth based in part on an accurate assessment of the core causes of the challenges they face.” Hale-Benson’s writings along with those of many other black scholars suggested a determination on their part to find valid solutions to the plight of African American youths, one that would take a comprehensive approach to find a remedy.

**Latter Day in the Late 1980s: O, When the Saints Went Marching Out**

Reflecting the drama of society at large, the 1980s were a decade of great triumphs and setbacks for the Latter Day Church. Members had much to be thankful for. The interior of the church was reconstructed. A beautiful ceiling suggested majesty and mission. Thanks to the expertise of Johnnie McGowen and Henry Duckless, the pulpit area was completely restructured and dressed in blue carpet. In addition to driving the church van, Clarence Johnson oversaw the raising of the auditorium floor and the

---


77 Ibid., 33.
reconstruction of the entrance. Earl Davis completed the tile work. The pastor joined in on various tasks, including hanging the chandeliers. A newly constructed balcony provided room for growth. Viki Duncan informed the pastor that Houston’s Scottish Rite Shrine Temple was being demolished and that those who wanted were welcome to salvage what they could. There the pastor secured enough stained glass for the twelve windows that were to be installed in thick cement walls. Beyond Latter Day, the Interdenominational Full Gospel Fellowship of Concerned Pastors (IFGCP) over which Kossie presided had grown to ten member churches.

Despite the apparent gains, the winds of change began to blow. With so many ministries mushrooming so quickly, the strivings of churches like Latter Day were soon met with doubt and criticism. One on-looker, knowing the history of the church contended that “[it did not] take God that long to work.” Others began to question Kossie’s level of faith or to wonder whether or not he had spent thirty years in ministry misinterpreting the voice of God. As the church was being renovated, many members’ lives underwent profound changes. Those who found greater prosperity sought more pleasant surroundings. New promotions, new houses, and new cars demanded a newer church replete with programs that traditional pastors had once left to social workers and educators: day-care centers, after school tutorials, and drug rehabilitation programs. Still others left in search of opportunities to preach.

The pastor continued to remind remaining members of “the vision,” although the attainment thereof seemed far away, especially given that key people were leaving. Although he was bishop of a fellowship of churches, his membership was one of the leanest of all. While Miracle House of Prayer # 1 and C.C. Revivals boasted standing room only, the few who attended Latter Day claimed entire rows to themselves. The pastor had a habit of saying “Amen, benches!” when the audience protested a given message in silence. During these lean years, the meaning of the statement was all too
literal. The word was out: “Kossie ain’t hardly got no people in there.” What on earth had gone wrong?

As one after another member stated his/her reason for departure, the Kossie girls found themselves stepping in to help where they could. Simmie was among the first. She held on to her characteristic sense of loyalty to her father, agreeing to handle administrative matters. Gifted with artistic skills and oratory, Viki organized creative programs and established important precedents for learning to “handle the floor,” a much needed skill in a Pentecostal church. Shere Kossie stepped forward to head the usher board. Kimberly, the last Kossie, did not have all the answers, but she determined to find solutions. Once her tenure at the University of Texas (1984-1989) had ended, she returned to Houston to “help build [the] church.” She also aimed to simply “be there, to support in any way.” Having gleaned a lot from her tour of Baptist, COGIC (LaDell Thomas), and interdenominational (David and Claudette Copeland) churches in Austin, TX, she acted as Sunday School Superintendent at Latter Day, chaired the church’s Evangelism/Outreach program, and served as president of the choir.

In addition to playing for services and directing the choir, I wrote my father encouraging notes and poems from time. One verse in particular was titled “Be Healed, Pastor!” He read it, but said nothing immediately. Men of his generation did not show emotions, and rarely did they discuss their deepest issues twenty-six-year-old daughters. Later, I learned that the contents had indeed meant something to him. During the Interdenominational Full Gospel Fellowship of Concerned Pastors’ (IFGFCP) annual fellowship banquet that year, he made a special announcement to the audience, asking participants to read the “beautiful poem” on the inside cover of the program that “Sister Karen” had written. “Surely the hand of God is on her life,” he said to decisive amens and hearty nods of approval. I beamed knowing that my father had just paid me one of the highest complements the preacher in him could give. Times would certainly get better.

Chapter 10: 1990s: The Secularization of a Spiritual Church

While AAIPCs of the 1980s distinguished themselves from their pre-civil rights predecessors by their optimism and openness to modernization, those of the 1990s are marked by their unprecedented exploitation of mass and print media, both of which introduced them to larger secular, religious, and academic audiences. The academic interest in AAIPCs stems from several impulses: (1) post-modern discourse called for the valuation and exploration of nontraditional subjects; (2) black scholars of the post-Civil Rights era expanded beyond their politico-Baptist fixation to appreciate the religious-cultural diversity existing within the greater black community; (3) African American Pentecostals and their offspring began to view themselves and their spiritual ancestors as noteworthy contributors to African American religious culture and to the conglomerate of cultures represented in the African Diaspora and to their familiar liberationist/constructionist projects.

With the exception of Zora Neale Hurston’s anthropological study *The Sanctified Church* (1935)\(^1\) and Ada Moorhead Holland’s biographical study *No Quittin’ Sense* (1969),\(^2\) positive book-length sociological accounts on black Pentecostalism began to appear as early 1980s with the Arthur Paris’s *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World* (1982).\(^3\) Here the author challenged conventional sociological descriptions of Pentecostals which left them b-soft of intelligence or initiative. Peter D. Goldsmith continued the trend when he submitted his anthropological description of a black Pentecostal church off the coast of Georgia in *When I Rise Cryin’ Holy* (1989).

---

Goldsmith's work is important because it placed African American Pentecostalism within the broader context of American religious history.

An increasing number of essays examined the contributions of Pentecostal women. Pearl Williams-Jones in "Pentecostal Women: A Minority Report," highlighted Black women leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who held positions and participated in realms of power normally reserved for men. James S. Tinney in "The Feminist Impulse in Black Pentecostalism" provided a "historical theological overview of women in Black Pentecostalism." Cheryl Gilkes in "Together and in Harness: Women's Tradition in the Sanctified Church" examined the contributions of women in black holiness traditions, noting the degree to which their economic power in many Pentecostal denominations balanced patriarchal impulses within such organizations.

Black Pentecostalism is treated in a positive light most extensively the 1990s. Presenting one of the most comprehensive sociological discussions of the black church in *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990), C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya noted the primarily black origins of the Pentecostal church and discuss the history and polity of the Church of God in Christ. Looking more closely at the internal workings of black Pentecostal churches, Frank M. Reid in "A Black Church's Understanding of the Holy Spirit" (1990), an unpublished dissertation, defined Pentecostalism as "a religious revolt against churches, white and black, that refused to hold on to a spirituality that was characterized as ignorant and overly emotional."

Further underscoring the significance of black Pentecostalism to African American religious history, William D. Watley in *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land* (1993)

---

argued that "[a]ny thorough study of current African American religion and church life must take into account the rise of Pentecostalism as a vibrant, vital, growing and radicalizing liturgical force in black American church life."9 Watley correctly contended that while the New Testament church experienced "charismatic eruptions" (glossalalia, healings, miracles, prophesy) often associated with Pentecostalism, "modern Pentecostalism owes much of its life and character to the African American quest for in-depth spirituality."10

Echoing Hurston, Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer in African-American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation examined the subversionist elements of Black Pentecostalism and discussed the acephalic structure of some black Pentecostal movements.11 Walter F. Pitts, Jr., in Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora (1993), made important comparisons between black Baptist and Pentecostal theology and ritual. Pitts affirmed that while "black Pentecostal groups draw many of their number from Baptist ranks, their insistence on moral and physical purity as well as glossolalia as a sign of spiritual conversion—of 'being saved'—differ from Black Baptist tradition."12 In Black Churches of Brooklyn (1994), Clarence Taylor argued that while black Pentecostals resisted many of the values of the dominant society, they embraced its “capitalist virtues” among others.13 Harvey G. Cox in Fire From Heaven (1995), although focusing on Pentecostal movements abroad, suggested that inner-city black Pentecostal churches may become threshing grounds for positive change and spiritual dynamism in the United States. Cheryl Sanders in Saints in Exile (1996)

---

10 Ibid., 12.
analyzed the exilic nature of black Pentecostalism, placing it within the greater African American struggle for affirmation and valuation.\(^{14}\)

Still other scholars have found cultural links to Africa in black Pentecostalism. Historian Sterling Stuckey in *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987) pointed to the ring shout as a vestige of the African American's spiritual connection to Africa.\(^{15}\) Walter Pitts in *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora* examined the ring shout ritual as well. While Pitts found transformations of the ring shout among African American slaves of the nineteenth century, the Shakers of St. Vincent, Trinidad Spiritual Baptists, and in Jamaican Kumina, Jamaican Convince, the Orisha of Trinidad, and Haitian Vodoun, Pitts overlooked the ring shout's obvious twentieth-century representation still found in black Pentecostal churches.\(^{16}\) Joseph Murphy in *Working the Spirit* (1994) highlights black Pentecostalism in his broad discussion of spirited worship in selected religious communities of the diaspora.\(^{17}\)

A number of scholars have produced a rich body of ethnographic works noting the religio-cultural vitality of black Pentecostal music. Paul Oliver investigated the musical contributions of selected early-twentieth century songwriters and performers in *Songsters and Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (1984).\(^{18}\) In *America's Black Musical Heritage* (1984), Tilford Brooks discussed instrumentation in black Pentecostal churches.\(^{19}\) In *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (1993), Arthur C. Jones argued that "like nineteenth-century Negro spirituals and twentieth-century African American hymnody, African American Pentecostal music treats themes of suffering and


\(^{16}\) Pitts, 93-114.


transformation; struggle and resistance; working and everyday spirituality; accountability; and hope and healing." He noted, however, that fast-paced rhythms and optimistic lyricism remain its distinguishing characteristics. Jon Michael Spencer in *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African-American Church* (1992) highlighted the preservationist contributions of black Pentecostals to the African American musical tradition. In "Happy in the Service of the Lord" (1996), Kip Lornell noted the influence of black Pentecostals on the gospel music tradition, particularly that of quartets in Memphis, Tennessee. Eileen Southern, a pioneer historian of the African American music tradition reiterated in *The Music of Black Americans* (1997) that black Pentecostals preserved the vibrant spirituality of African worship and of plantation slaves' houses.

The important contributions of the aforementioned scholars notwithstanding, black Pentecostals have also begun to view themselves and their churches as noteworthy subjects of history. This is particularly true of those affiliated with the Church of God in Christ. Mrs. E. W. Mason, wife of the founder, was among the first to initiate the trend of celebratory historical efforts on COGIC. In 1979 she published *The Man Charles Harrison Mason* which contained sermons from Mason's early ministry (1915-1929) and a biographical sketch of his life (1866-1961). COGIC headquarters also published *From the Beginning of Bishop C. H. Mason and the Early Pioneers of the Church of God in Christ* (1991), a collection of photographs, sermons, minutes, biographical sketches, and other pertinent COGIC memorabilia. In 1994 Alfred Z. Hall authored *So You Want To Know Your Church*, which contains concise information on COGIC church

---

history; structure; ecclesiastical, executive, and secretarial offices; auxiliaries; pastoral and temporal care ministries; stewardship; tithing; the doctrines; the ordinances; related ministries and information; and COGIC Foreign Missions locations and administrators. Continuing in the celebratory mode, Librarian Emma J. Clark penned *Dr. Mattie McGlothen: A Virtuous Woman* (1995), a work detailing the contributions of McGlothen, a native Texan who was eventually appointed fourth General Supervisor of the International Women's Department and the Third President of the International Women's Convention of the COGIC.


Among the first to study a COGIC personality in depth, Ada Moorhead Holland co-authored *No Quittin' Sense* (1969) with her subject, Reverend C. C. White of Jacksonville, Texas, "a 79-year-old Negro preacher" when Holland initiated her project. Unlike the bulk of literature that examined religious organizations from the top down, Holland provided a thick description of a Pentecostal pastor who not only survived his

---

priestly mission but managed to engage a prophetic one despite the difficult socio-geographical context in which he lived. While Holland's and White's non-fictional work chronicles the life of a COGIC pastor who remained in rural Texas, Vernita Crenshaw's *Black Girl* (1992), a self-published work, and Emma Clark's aforementioned *Dr. Mattie McGlothen: A Virtuous Woman* (1995), delineated the experiences of westward-migrating, southern black women for whom faith in God was an organizing principle.

Helping to elucidate COGIC history in the Houston and the Southwest, Earline Allen compiled "The Birth of a Jurisdiction: Southeast No. 1" (1995) and her "COGIC: History at a Glance" (1997). "The Birth of a Jurisdiction" is best described as a documentary history of the said COGIC jurisdiction, the headquarters of which are located in Houston. Allen’s "COGIC: History at a Glance" (1997) is a 169-page course outline containing photographs, articles, excerpts from programs and convention souvenir booklets and other pertinent information about the national COGIC organization.31

Adding to the commemoration of COGIC, in 1996 the organization launched *The Whole Truth* magazine, a quarterly publication of the Church of God in Christ that contains relevant historical articles highlighting the contributions of selected COGIC leaders.32 In an effort to pass historical knowledge on to COGIC youth, Curtis L. Lewis, II published *COGIC: Portraits of Our Heroes," 1897-1997* (1997), a coloring book containing brief artistic sketches and narrative descriptions of pertinent COGIC leaders, places, and events. With the same target audience in mind, Dorothy A. Brown and Mary Louise Webster edited *Scholastic Motivation Ministries Manual.*33 Dedicated

---

30 Vernita Crenshaw, *Black Girl*, (Missouri City Texas, 1992). The disclaimer printed in the front of Crenshaw’s first-person narrative affirming that *Black Girl* is a work of fiction is problematic, especially given that the main character not only attended Hutson-Tillotson College and Prairie View A & M, but in October of 1992 purportedly “received [her] healing by the laying on of hands by Dr. Fred Price,” a famous religious personality. Yet the events of the character’s life provide rare entry into the experiences of an intriguing Southwestern black woman.
32 *The Whole Truth* (P.O. Box 2017 Memphis, TN 38101).
to “[p]reparing today’s generation to be tomorrow’s leaders,” Scholastic Motivation Ministries aims to encourage academic achievement among COGIC youth by sponsoring competitive and non-competitive opportunities for growth and enrichment. Competitions are held in oratory; mathematics; computer; bible; spelling; drilling; jump rope; and individual talents (art, choreography, gospel comedy, instrumental music, poetry, and vocal music (classical and gospel). Non-competitive ministries offer a variety of workshops including the COGIC Gentlemen’s Workshop; Young Women’s Workshop; Drama Workshop; and the Beginning Writers’ Workshop.\footnote{34}

A growing number of Pentecostal writers, pastors, and teachers in the South and Southwest began to publish non-COGIC specific works through alternative markets. Pastor and former Broadway performer Patricia Brown Johnson (Interfaith Ministries, Humble, Texas) published \textit{Warriors on Call}, a book highlighting the importance of the ministry of intercession along with the spiritual prerequisites for effective prayer. Responding to the current AAIPC call for spiritual transparency (sincere acknowledgment of one’s own imperfection) resonating in AAIPC circles, Dr. Ed Montgomery published \textit{What to Do When It Hurts So Bad} (1994),\footnote{35} an inspirational work in which he relates how he and his wife struggled to recover faith in God after their daughter’s death from cancer.\footnote{36} Similarly, in \textit{Mental Toughness for Success},\footnote{37} Houston’s I.V. Hilliard’s recounts his journey from a twenty-three member congregation to his becoming the first pastor in the history of Houston to build two churches simultaneously, and the first to taxi from one sanctuary to the other by private helicopter. As do many African-American pastors of the transparent age, Hilliard acknowledged having overcome bouts with low self-esteem and faithlessness by drawing on the positive messages of

\footnote{34} It appears that COGIC women have played a primary role in the documentation and preservation of COGIC history. Their contributions certainly deserve in-depth scholarly attention. 
\footnote{35} Dr. Ed Montgomery, \textit{What To Do When It Hurts So Bad} (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1994)
\footnote{37} I.V. Hilliard, \textit{Mental Toughness for Success}, (Houston, TX: Light Publications, 1996). Hilliard has also established a satellite church in Beaumont, TX.
motivational speaker Zig Ziggler and Dr. Fred Price. As a result of his changed thinking, Hilliard managed to attract impressive gatherings of largely middle-class African Americans, including at least one famous athlete.

In Dallas, 150 miles north of Houston, Dr. Tony Evans, co-founder and senior pastor of the 3,000-member Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship authored *Let's Get to Know Each Other: What White and Black Christians Need to Know About Each Other* (1995) to encourage interracial cooperation. Evans is popular among white conservatives. Bill McCartney, founder of Promise Keepers, wrote the foreword to Evans’s work. Also focusing on the need for interracial healing and understanding, Reverend Earl Carter (COGIC) in *No Apology Necessary, Just Respect* (1997) attempts to interpret the African American experience with slavery, oppression, and racism through hidden prophecies in the Old Testament and to help white readers understand the twentieth-century African American’s fundamental call for deference and appreciation.

**AAIPCs and Christian Media:**

The fact that Earl Carter and other black Pentecostals/Charismatics are actively engaging in writing their own stories and publishing their views is a noteworthy development indeed. For their move beyond orality has made them subjects of written history, the gateway to academic valuation and critique. However, those who are in a financial position to take advantage of electronic media sources to spread their messages have become “open books” to the masses—audio-visual icons of popular culture.

Having long discarded their early-twentieth century ancestors’ colorful description of television as “the one-eyed-devil,” AAIPCs of the latter twentieth century recognize that television provides them with more instant exposure and accessibility to the world than any other medium. Not only has television facilitated the expansion of their general

---


Christian mission, but it has also launched local AAIPC ministries into national and even international spotlights. While black Pentecostal pastors and performers have long taken advantage of radio communication technology, they did not join the “electronic church” in significant numbers until the 1980s. With the call for diversity at its peak, AAIPCs found an open door at Paul Crouch’s prosperous Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). Those who made the TBN connection were certain to benefit from their efforts. For despite TBN’s humble beginnings, the network “entered the 1990s as one of the sturdiest, most reliable, and most popular religious-television services in the world.”

Crouch’s TBN, carried on over 1,315 cable systems and reaches approximately 16 million households daily, seems to be a technological harbinger of the advent of post-ethnic charismatic Christianity. Trinity and its subsidiaries own more than 100 stations nationwide and control more than a dozen other stations through loans from Trinity or Crouch family members. Moreover, an additional 100 stations carry TBN’s programming. Reaching vast national and international audiences, TBN owns television stations in Tustin, California; Phoenix; Oklahoma City; Pembroke Park, Fort Pierce, and Jacksonville, Florida; Richmond and Greenwood, Indiana; Fishkill, New York; Federal Way, Washington; Westminster, Colorado; Louisville, Ohio; Irving, Harlingen, Orange, and Houston, Texas; Decatur, Georgia, Portland, Oregon; Nevis, West Indies; Castries, Saint Lucia; Milan, Italy; Athens, Greece; Bisho, Ciskei, and Umtata, Transkei (South Africa); San José, Costa Rica; and Nueva San Salvador, El Salvador. TBN also broadcasts

---

40 It should be noted that AAIPCs of the southwest have always taken advantage of radio communication technology. Many use the radio for advertising purposes alone, and others for religious programming. Prior to Darryl Martin’s black-owned KWWJ established in 1988, black pastors used KYOK, KJOJ, and KHCB, and KTSU for the same purpose. Arthur Bonds was among the few to purchase regular radio time in the Pre-Civil Rights era (1940s-1950s). His program was broadcast in Chicago as well. Among local AAIPCs using radio technology in the Post-Civil Rights era are Bishop J.L. Parker, E.W. Wilcots, Bishop R. Taylor, Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, Jr., Pastor Rose Mary Williams, Prophet Smith, Michael P. Williams, and Shelton Bady. One of Houston’s favorites during the 1980s and 1990s, however, is Marvin T. Boyd of Baytown, TX.


42 Ibid., 189.
on superpower short-wave radio station KTBN, and on Radio Paradise, a 50,000-watt nondirectional AM radio station located in St. Kitts, West Indies.43

The station provides affiliate ministries with global exposure and diverse audiences. Information technology and electronic communication have helped to globalize the ministers, laymen, and the Charismatic-Pentecostal message as well. While African American missionaries and academics had long expressed interest in black cultures abroad, the black masses were largely drawn to them through the increased media attention given to socio-political developments in various African and Caribbean countries.

Television has broadened the appeal of at least four national AAIPCs pastors of the 1990s: T.D. Jakes, Myles Munroe, Jacquelyn McCullough, and Juanita Bynum. While each had already established local and even regional followings, Christian television provided them with unprecedented access and exposure. Each further enhanced television appearances with audio-visual materials, books, and supplementary materials.

T.D. Jakes's success story exemplifies the positive role that television can play in the life of a thriving ministry. "The favorite preacher [among blacks] in the U.S.," according to Carlton Pearson, Jakes pastored a prosperous 500-member church in Charleston, West Virginia. He was introduced to Carlton Pearson by Houston's Sarah Jordan Powell, a gospel soloist raised in COGIC. After inviting Jakes to minister at Higher Dimension ministries in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Pearson welcomed the veteran preacher to minister at the 1993 Azusa Conference, held at the Maybe Center of Oral Roberts University. I and six other family members were in attendance. As members of the audience sat on the edges of their seats awaiting his every word, it was certain that Jakes was making an indelible impression on all present. His sermon, "A Sacrifice of Praise," struck a familiar chord with the audience of approximately 6,000 Pentecostals-Charismatics, most of them of African descent. As the audience roared to

---

its feet in a collective witness to his message, one that sought to heal the pains of the past, it was obvious that Jakes had created an historic moment by offering a timely word. Young, but full of wisdom; commanding, yet compassionate; accomplished, yet approachable, Jakes appeals to a broad spectrum of people. Most are no doubt taken aback by his rare combination of strength, power, and grace. He seems to announce by his presence and delivery the dawning of a new age among AAIPCs of the twentieth century. He makes them proud to be “counted among those who are sanctified.”

A constructive/restorationist, Jakes targets the needs of both men and women through redemptive messages whose universal call for repentance cross denominational, racial, and economic barriers. Moreover, his interest in the well-being of both men and women and in the immediacy of the divine strike familiar chords among African-American Christians given the current crises facing many black families. His psycho-therapeutic messages, which often aim to diagnose the problems of, heal, and empower listeners, enjoy widespread appeal. Similar to other post-civil rights pastors of African descent, Jakes frequently encourages African Americans to move beyond the pains of the past and embrace life to the fullest. His audiences trust him because he is one of them. He admits, “I’ve known the taste of government cheese and of filet mignon.” While distancing himself from past behavioral transgressions, Jakes, like other AAIPCs, does not seek to erase the testimony of his own spiritual deliverance. In fact, he encourages ministers to show their scars and acknowledge their human struggles so that the laity may better understand how to live the Christian life with patience and perseverance.

His call for transparence is fully developed in a recently published book and companion workbook, Naked and Not Ashamed. Arguing that Christians have been “afraid to reveal what God longs to heal,” Jakes declares that they can hold “no secrets in

44 This is a phrase that early-to-mid twentieth century AAIPCs would sometimes use during their testimonies. “I praise God that I am counted among those who are sanctified,” a testifier might say.
45 In Varieties of Postmodern Theology (New York: The State University Press of New York, 1989), David Griffins outlines at least identifies four types of post-modern theology: (1) constructive (or revisionary), (2) deconstructive (or eliminative), (3) liberationist, and (4) restorationist (or conservation).
the secret place,”47 i.e., they must be open and honest with God about their needs and shortcomings, especially given that God, a loving father, is aware of their imperfect condition, of their fallen nature.48 He goes on to announce that “Superman is Dead” and argues that the heroes of Christendom are not perfect people, but rather those who are “resilient enough to survive tragedy and adversity.”49 Jakes further underscores that “[t]here can be no fulfillment where there is no passion. This intense desire must be strong enough to propel whomever the individual closer to whatever the dream despite the inevitability of obstacles.”50 Jakes encourages the reader to take full advantage of time alone and not to confuse this precious commodity with loneliness. Employing the metaphor “fire in the winter” to allude to his grandmother’s continued spiritual resilience throughout her 90 years, Jakes acknowledged learning that his grandmother’s “silence was not boredom” but “the mark of someone who had learned how to be alone,”... of a someone who was at peace.51 After relating the importance of learning the definition of “real friendship”52 and of reestablishing broken relationships,53 Jakes then suggests how to “make a gradual transition from outer relationships to inward revelation, i.e., a matured state of spiritual well-being. Emphasizing his belief in the importance of the blood of Jesus in this entire process, Jakes closes by reminding his readers that Christ “laid aside His garments”54 as a symbol of his honesty and willingness to be open with his disciples as well as with his father, a lesson for all believers to heed.55

Jakes most popular work, nonetheless, is Woman Thou Art Loosed.56 The work earned rave cover reviews from at least three internationally known African-American

48 Ibid., 1-6.
49 Ibid., 24.
50 Ibid., 30.
51 Ibid., 45-46.
52 Ibid., 63-75.
53 Ibid., 77-88.
54 Ibid., 119.
55 Ibid., 124—142.
Pentecostal-Charismatics. Although publishers naturally print positive blurbs to increase the market value of their works, popular opinion suggests that the reviewers’ claims are not exaggerated. Carlton Pearson noted that “Woman Thou Art Loosed is the heart of the Father ministering to the women of His Son’s Body. Literally thousands of women have been set free by these anointed works of T.D. Jakes. This book is mind-challenging, life-changing and spirit-transforming truth. Your life will never be the same after reading it.” Dr. Debbye Turner, Miss America 1990, contended that “[e]very woman in this country needs to hear the message that God has given Bishop Jakes. It is impossible for someone to hear this message and not be encouraged, delivered and transformed forever. I know that because of this work from God, my life will never be the same. Finally, Dr. Ernestine Cleveland Reems, daughter of the late “Dad Cleveland” of the Church of God in Christ, acknowledges: “Our church, The Center of Hope, in Oakland, California, has been greatly impacted by this man’s ministry. I want to highly recommend Woman, Thou Art Loosed to every woman in this country. You will be blessed!”

How to account for the pervasive success of the work? In essence, Woman Thou Art Loosed was perfectly timed. When Jakes commenced his teaching series, black women throughout the nation had begun to grow weary of the complex existence that “color” forced them to lead. Historically berated and under-appreciated it seemed by white men and women and even their own African American male counterparts, the weighty list of stereotypes and truisms became increasingly more difficult to bear. A conservative Republican platform of the 1980s had managed to transform them all into welfare queens, Jezebels of the modern age. Many Americans became intoxicated with sensationalistic television programs that pronounced doom upon single-parent households, the greatest percentage of which were headed by black women. Few were interested in acknowledging the socio-economic diversity that existed within the national black community. Most tended to focus on the worst possible scenarios; too few were

57 Ibid., 7.
willing to acknowledge the strides that hundreds of African American women had made to work their way out of poverty, into the middle class, and beyond. Unlike many black ministers who were traditionally content with blaming the sins of the world on women—a stubborn post-Eden tradition—telling them to stay in their place, Jakes took the time to acknowledge their hurts with patience, care, and a willingness to understand. To date, *Woman Thou Art Loosed* has sold more than 1,000,000 copies. Jake’s subsequent work *Daddy Loves His Girls* emphasizes the loving paternal nature of God. *Can You Stand to Be Blessed?, Water in the Wilderness,* and *Why?* all reiterate the price to be paid for spiritual growth and fulfillment.58

Jakes was also careful to address men via his series entitled *Loose That Man and Let Him Go.*59 As in *Woman Thou Art Loosed,* Jakes acknowledged the historical struggles associated with black manhood in America and offered spiritual suggestions needed to overcome the obstacles imposed by racism, classism, and spiritual dearth. In his latest book *Lay Aside the Weight* (1998), Jakes elaborates on his personal struggle with weight gain and offers a biblical solution to the matter.

In 1996 Jakes moved his ministry to Texas where he founded a family oriented ministry in Dallas, called the Potter’s House.60 The 5,000-seat facility, located on a 28-acre site, was purchased for $3 million from televangelist W. V. Grant Jr.61 Jakes envisions that the Potter’s House will be a place where “broken vessels are reshaped into other vessels.” Reiterating that Christians should be forthright, Jakes warns that the Potter’s House is not for “spiritual yuppies, but for people who need to be made whole.”62 Obviously others trusted Jakes to accomplish his mission. To date Jakes has

60 While many pastors in the Dallas/Fort Worth area appreciated Jakes’s ministry, quite a few bore mixed feelings about his relocation. With reason, many feared losing members to this spiritual giant.
62 Interview with Carlton Pearson, *Praise the Lord,* TBN, (Dallas), May 28, 1996.
more than 8,000 members. So influential is Jakes that celebrities such as the Dallas Cowboys have begun to frequent his services on a regular basis. Among them is Deon Sanders, who in an interview with Carlton Pearson on TBN’s “Praise the Lord” program affirmed the spiritual benefit of his worshipping at Jakes’s Potter’s House. Knowing of his pervasive influence, a number of Texas politicians have begun to seek Jake’s company, including the Mayor Ron Kirk of Dallas, TX, and State Governor George Bush. Both attended the ground-breaking ceremony for Jake’s newest undertaking—Project 2000, a multiplex that aims to meet the socio-spiritual needs of people of all ages.

**Children of Destiny:**

Like Jakes, Dr. Myles Munroe has also benefited greatly from Christian broadcasting. Unlike his Pentecostal forefathers, organic intellectuals\(^3\) whose new-found spirituality was derided by the modern call for empirical Christianity, Munroe and other AAIPCs of the later twentieth century are able to flourish in a post-modern age that not only celebrates diversity and inclusion but also values subjective realities. Thus, while their ancestors, lived largely in a self-imposed socio-cultural communities, AAIPCs of the latter twentieth century see themselves as ambassadors of purpose—children of destiny—rather than as “pilgrims in this foreign land.”

Dr. Myles Munroe best articulates this impulse. Munroe aims to help his international listeners overcome the affects of colonization and dispossession. He is founder and president of Bahamas Faith Ministries International, an all-encompassing network of ministries headquartered in Nassau, Bahamas. Like a number of young full-gospel ministers of the later-twentieth-century, Munroe obtained his B.A. from Oral Roberts University. With majors in education, fine arts, and theology, he earned an

---

\(^3\) According to Cornel West, organic intellectuals are those rooted in practical as opposed to theoretical intellectual pursuits.
M.A. degree in administration from the University of Tulsa. In 1990 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Oral Roberts University.

Different from Carlton Pearson, who determined to encourage socio-spiritual bridging among members of the charismatic community, or from Dr. Fred Price of Los Angeles, California, who focused his attention on the “Word of Faith,” Myles Munroe emphasized finding one’s purpose and fulfilling one’s potential. Munroe’s approach signaled the advent of “liberationist” charismata. Acknowledging his on-going concern for the international victims of socio-political exploitation, Munroe dedicated his work *Understanding Your Potential* (1996) not only to his children and parents but also “to all the ‘Third World’ people throughout the world for whom [Munroe] live[s] and breathes that [they] may come to know Jesus Christ, the only One who can truly help [them] to understand and realize [their] true and full potential.” Munroe’s didactic approach is evidenced in his delivery. Munroe often lectures in-depth for two to four intense hours at a time. Those who frequent his meetings bring paper and pen to take notes, for surely Munroe will give them much to ponder. The style of his publications mirror Monroe’s didactic approach. The chapters of his works close with a recapitulation of information previously shared.\(^{64}\) They also come equipped with detailed workbooks prepared so that readers may indeed “study” their way to a healthy spirituality and self-appreciation.

Munroe reemphasized his concern for the Third World at the end of his work by writing that “[m]any of the nations that progressed and developed through the industrial revolution have reinforced (by attitudes, policies, and legislation) the notion that these Third World peoples do not possess the potential to develop the skills, intelligence and sophistication necessary to equal that of industrialized states.” He continues:

> With this prejudice in mind, I wish to say to all Third World peoples everywhere—black, yellow, brown, red and white; African, American, Indian, Spanish, Latin, Arabian, Oriental and other nationalities—your potential is

---

limitless. You possess the ability to achieve, develop, accomplish, produce, create and perform anything your mind can conceive.\textsuperscript{65}

The breadth and scope of Munroe’s message is evinced in his observation that “[t]he wealth within the Third World must be realized, harnessed and maximized by its people. We must be willing to commit ourselves to tapping the potential within the land, our youth, the arts, sports and music. Our government must believe that they have the ability to improve on systems and forms institutionalized by the industrialized states. The Church in the Third World must begin to take responsibility for its own people and appreciate that they have the potential to write their own songs and books and to develop an indigenous curriculum for Christian education, leadership training, resource management, and financial autonomy and accountability.”\textsuperscript{66} Munroe’s contribution essentially highlights the desire of many contemporary AAIPCs to embrace life with renewed confidence and verve.

\textbf{Jacquelyn McCullough:}

A number of women ministers have made notable contributions to the diverse AAIPCs tapestry of the latter twentieth century. Jacquelyn McCullough of Buffalo, New York, best represents the contemporary AAIPC woman’s prophetic Christian mission.\textsuperscript{67} Similar to Jakes and Munroe, McCullough often focuses on a spiritual liberation that is pervasive and profound. The call for holiness in her messages is complemented by a call for psycho-spiritual “wholeness” and a thoroughly fulfilled self. While Munroe emphasizes purpose, and Jakes, healing, McCullough highlights the importance of divine timing and of knowing one’s “season.” McCullough argues that there is a preordained time for certain developments to occur in the lives of Christians. In her estimation, because none is automatically privy to such divine information, all who

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, 152.
\textsuperscript{67} Claudette Copeland of New Creations Fellowship in San Antonio, TX, has made important strides as well.
want to live productive lives, i.e., to maximize their potential, all must pray to distinguish times of sowing from times of reaping.

**Juanita Bynum:**

"Coming in her own way,"Juanita Bynum has shocked the AAIPC world with her non-nonsense insistence on moral purity among AAIPCs of the modern age. Decrying the unmatched moral laxity and secularism invading black Pentecostal-Charismatic circles since the 1970s, Bynum carefully reminds "saints" that physical and spiritual purity are moral requisites, not options. The bold title of her video and audio cassette series, "No More Sheets," challenges young black Christians, male and female, to treat their bodies as "temples of the Holy Spirit." While her often graphic anecdotes sometimes offend first- and second-generation AAIPCs, the "twenty- and thirty-something" crowds generally appreciate her willingness to "go there," i.e., tackle sensitive moral issues candidly.

**Celebrity Christians:**

Although black ministers and television are only recent companions, black celebrities possess a long-standing relationship with electronic media outlets. Christian publications and broadcast systems have always been eager to highlight the spiritual experiences of famous athletes and entertainers. As in the 1980s, African American athletes of the 1990s who acknowledge charismatic experiences continue to make the headlines. Houston's Joe DeLoach and Evander Holyfield are among them.

Bay City, Texas, native Joe DeLoach captured the international spotlight by winning a gold medal at Seoul in 1988, but he eventually exchanged his passion for athletic competition for the Christian mission in the 1990s. Recalling that he felt "the strength of a lion" in his feet during his Seoul competition, DeLoach charged passed Houston's Olympic icon, Carl Lewis to win the race decisively. "Thank you, Lord." DeLoach

---

88 This is a phrase often used by AAIPC emcees or program directors when introducing soloists and/or speakers.
whispered as the American anthem rang through the air in honor of his accomplishment.\textsuperscript{69} Despite his victory, an injury kept DeLoach from repeating his victory in the 1992 Barcelona games, and he eventually decided not to compete in the 1996 Olympic games.\textsuperscript{70}

After watching the Barcelona games, DeLoach experienced a spiritual change. Although he was happy for his teammates success, he was personally devastated by not being able to participate. He prayed to God, “[w]hy did You give me such an awesome talent, then let me be injured?...[y]ou allowed me to go to the 1988 Olympics and run in the front of billions of people as if I were racing on eagle’s wings. Why?”\textsuperscript{71}

The answer that DeLoach received was a poignant one: “The passion you feel for running is the passion I want you to feel for Me.” It was then that DeLoach realized that his Christian commitment had been shallow. “I was a Hollywood Christian,” he admitted. “In that moment I no longer wanted to be a celebrity who would make bold public statements about the Lord but have no foundation or commitment...I knew I didn’t want to be a man who knows Christ as Savior but not as Lord. I decided at that moment I needed to focus on my commitment to God and let everything else take care of itself.”\textsuperscript{72}

Proceeding his inner change, DeLoach spoke with his pastor, Michael P. Williams, of Houston’s Joy Tabernacle, who assured him, “God will not allow the enemy to humiliate you publicly then reward you privately....Whatever God decides, He’ll use you as a witness.” DeLoach later ascertained that God was calling him to ministry. Accordingly, he became an elder and youth pastor at Joy Tabernacle, responsible for the men’s ministry and 150 youths. Although many people encouraged DeLoach to prepare for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games, DeLoach simply could not initiate the process. His pastor finally helped him to find a new course. “Joe, maybe it’s not in your heart anymore,” Williams intimated. DeLoach then realized that his passion for God had

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}, 38.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}
superseded his desire for running and winning the Olympic gold. He opted to invest the same energy and time in teaching young people about the true meaning of success, which he believes "is not based on meager temporal accomplishments but on the whole picture of life. It’s about being part of something bigger than yourself"— "the kingdom of God; the needs of other people; and living a God-given, rather than man-dictated, purpose."

**Evander Holyfield:**

Evander Holyfield's conversion experience has been covered in both electronic and print media. The thirty-four-year-old heavy-weight boxing champion of the world made headlines when he decided to reenter the ring despite a physician's warning that doing so might cost his life. Holyfield was not simply disobeying doctor's orders without giving any thought to the matter. After attending a Benny Hinn meeting, he believed unequivocally that he had been healed of his heart condition. The world was further convinced when he defeated Mike Tyson in one round. Holyfield's unquestionable victory made him only the second person to win the heavy-weight title three times.

While at a Benny Hinn conference, he met internist Dr. Janice Itson, who is also an ordained minister. Holyfield was impressed by her spirituality and thorough knowledge of the scripture. While Evander felt no immediate romantic attraction to Itson, he admitted that he "loved her spirit." After two years of friendship, he and Janice married October 4, 1996.

**Black Christian Entertainers in Texas:**

**Kirk Franklin and the Family:**

In addition to Christian athletes, entertainers have also gained increased attention from electronic and print media sources. Dallasite Kirk Franklin, the biggest Texas gospel entertainment phenomenon of the 1990s is among them. By the time Franklin appeared on the February 2, 1998 cover of *Jet* magazine, he had already performed on the Jay Leno

---

75 *Ibid.*, 70.
Show and had been catapulted to lasting fame by his hit tune “Stomp,” which he recorded with the group God’s Property. A relative newcomer to the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition, Franklin, 28, invited his fans to have a “Holy Ghost party” with him to the rhythm of the aforementioned gospel hit. Franklin became a national icon of funky contemporary gospel music as early as 1993 with the group Kirk Franklin and the Family, and its self-titled album. Franklin’s highly-acclaimed Whatcha Lookin’ 4 sold one million copies, and his Kirk Franklin and the Family Christmas album continues to be a holiday favorite.

Franklin has recently appeared in concert in Houston with Houston gospel diva Yolanda Adams, John P. Key, and Detroit’s Fred Hampton. While some criticize Franklin for his sound, which they believe to be “too contemporary, too dance-oriented, too hip hop, just too secular,” Franklin insists on his own musical interpretation and artistic freedom:

I understand how they might see this as not godly, as not spiritual...I understand. I was raised in the Baptist church. I was raised in traditionalism. And when God pulled me out of it, I didn’t know what I was going either when I felt the Lord leading me to start celebrating all types of musical cultural but still putting Jesus on top of it.

Yet Franklin admits that “the criticism and the things that people say about [him] hurt [him]; they are very painful.” He continues: “There have been times I have lain in my hotel crying and asking God, ‘Hey, what people are saying about me hurts me. I believe in my heart that You led me to do it. But people are killing me; this hurts me.”

Franklin was consoled only after “God spoke to him and told him to ignore the critics and continue to spread his music all over the world.” Franklin adds: “God really

---

58.
77 Ibid., 60.
78 Ibid., 62.
79 Ibid., 63.
80 Ibid.
laid on my heart that if they don’t have nail prints in their hands and they don’t have blood streaming down their forehead, you don’t owe them no explanation.” In essence, Franklin insisted that he was indeed “God’s property.”

New Migrations: Local Independent Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of the African Diaspora

The on-going contributions of regional talents and celebrities notwithstanding, the Southwestern spiritual landscape is being greatly influenced by the advent of Diasporic Charismatic churches. The number of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean in the Houston area has been accompanied by a growing number of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches among newcomers to Houston’s now international black community. The majority of these congregations are located in Houston’s multi-national, multi-ethnic Southwestern corner. Pastors Steve and Joy Onoja Ahms’s Chapel of Praise represents this trend. Like many Independent Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, Chapel of Praise began with prayer meetings in an apartment. As the number of participants increased, the rapidly growing group of prayer warriors moved to a hotel. The congregation experienced such tremendous growth that members relocated to 8800 Bissonnet in Southwest Houston. The group has grown to include a local assembly of believers from over thirty different countries. On January 17, 1993, Chapel of Praise started a replete worship program. Most recently, Pastors Onoja Ahms and their members have moved into a “miracle edifice” on 7414 Cook Road, purchased in September 1995.

The internal and external ministries of Chapel of Praise reflect the pastor’s vision: “Setting the Captives Free” (Isaiah 61:1). Reaching the entire world with the gospel and the healing and deliverance power of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Similar to many of the larger

---

81 Ibid.
82 Texas COGIC Kim Burrell has also begun to impact contemporary gospel music trends via the COGIC gospel music medium. Burrell has appeared on Channel 11’s Crossroads program and in a feature article in Houston’s Gospel Monthly Magazine. Similarly, COGIC soprano Bettye Ransom Nelson, often compared to Sara Jordan Powell, gained broader exposure when she performed at Higher Dimension’s Azusa Conference ’93.
83 "The Chapel of Praise: Brief History," 1.
Independent Pentecostal-Charismatic churches throughout the area, Chapel of Praise offers ample opportunities for enrichment and involvement: Children’s Church; Deliverance Ministry; Charity Bank (Food & Care Ministry); Maintenance Ministry; Men’s Movement for Christ; Office/Secretarial Ministry; Praise & Worship Ministry; Prayer Warriors; Prayer Partners; Records Information Ministry; Singles’ Ministry; Soldiers of Christ; Tape Ministry; Women of Faith; Youth Ministry; Usher Ministry.

What distinguishes Chapel of Praise from other AAIPC churches in the city is its multi-ethnic composition; over thirty different countries are represented, although the message is preached in English. As a result, Chapel of Praise’s local and national deliverance, evangelical, tape, telephone, television, and radio ministries are complemented by an international broadcast program —*Faith Alive International Broadcast*—airing on three short-wave frequencies: 15.685 MHz or 15,685 khz (WWCR); 1700 (UTC) and 1600 (UTC). Rapid expansion has also resulted not only in the congregation’s new fellowship with Pastor Pablo Monroy’s Templo de Alabanza: “La Ultima Cosecha,” but also in the establishment of a congregation in Dallas in September 1995.84

The growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic ministries among immigrants of the African Diaspora like Onoja Ahms provide a thoughtful pause, if not closure, to the phenomenal unfolding of the AAIPC story in the Southwest. No doubt the pioneers of Pentecostalism in the region would be more than pleased with the results. While William J. Seymour would applaud AAIPC’s’s move toward ecumenical worship, and Lucy Farrow, their widespread passion for the children of Africa, Charles H. Mason would shout with exultation because they have continued to say, “Yes, Lord!”

---

84 Chapel of Praise—Dallas, P.O. Box 743862, Dallas, TX 75374.
Chapter 11: Looking Forward to the New Millennium

You haven't gone through all this for nothing! God's getting ready to bless you like you've never been blessed before. Praise will make it easy. Praise will bring it forth...Look at three people and say, "Get Ready! Get Ready! Get Ready!"¹

Having covered much ground throughout the twentieth century, AAIPCs of the 1990s find themselves in a positive, expectant mode. In harmony with Cornel West's postmodernist project, they are actively engaged in a liberationist narrative. Although "narrative—story that ties memory and expectation to the present moment—is the vehicle of hope for the poor, the outsiders, the oppressed,"² for AAIPCs it is also "the story of the memories, the hopes, and the liberation of a historical community."³ Thus while AAIPCs continue to plot their course, they do so with the confidence of explorers, not of wanderers devoid history or vision. The forces of change over time have taken them to a different existential place, yet they are firmly rooted in the lessons of the past. Realizing the error of indiscriminately casting off the old, but proven, to embrace the new, but untimed, AAIPCs of the 1990s are careful to reassess, remember, and reclaim familiar landscapes. While the spiritual strivings of some reflect their waning confidence in the concept of salvation through material progress,⁴ those of others evince their unprecedented success and the cultural alienation sometimes associated therewith. Among black theologians, this new age of remembering, healing, and restoration was articulated as early as the 1970s with the liberationist, African-centered theology of James Cone. However, it receives further grounding in the Western academic tradition by the musings of philosopher/theologian Cornel West.

Dialoguing with European, American, and African-American intellectual traditions, in *Prophesy Deliverance!: an Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, (1982) West argued that “Afro-American thought must take seriously the most influential and enduring intellectual tradition in its experience: evangelical and pietistic Christianity.” West continued:

This tradition began the moment that African slaves, laboring in sweltering heat on plantations owned and ruled primarily by white American Christians, tried to understand their lives and servitude in the light of biblical texts, Protestant hymns, and Christian testimonies. This theological reflection—simultaneously building on and breaking with earlier African non-Christian theological reflection—is inseparable from the black church. This “church,” merely a rubric to designate black Christian communities and many denominations, came into being when slaves decided, often at the risk of life and limb, to ‘make Jesus their choice’ and to share with one another their common Christian sense of purpose and Christian understanding of their circumstances. Like the tradition of other Christian communities, this took on many forms, some more prophetic than others, and its multiplicity of streams made possible the rich diversity of contemporary black theological reflection which encompasses both prophetic and priestly streams, the visionary and quotidian components, of the tradition. Afro-American critical thought must focus on the former of these streams, the prophetic.

According to West, “[t]he fuller prophetic Christian tradition must thus insist upon both this worldly liberation and otherworldly salvation as the proper loci of Christianity.” Transformation is both individual and communal; secular and spiritual.

---

6 Ibid., 15—16.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.

While West etched out a philosophical framework for revolutionizing the African-American spirit, literary theorists set out to radicalize the mind. In *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (1992), Henry Louis Gates examined how “the debate over canon formation affected the development of African-American literature as a subject of instruction in the American academy.” Gates advocated that black literary scholars “master the master’s pieces” by anthologizing “essential” texts of the African American canon, i.e., those of the “crucially central” authors...whom [literary scholars] feel to be indispensable to an understanding of the shape, and shaping of the tradition.” Gates affirmed that his having taking on such a project demanded that he “negotiate a position between, on the one hand, William Bennett, who claims that black people can have no canon, no masterpieces, and on the other hand, those on the critical left who wonder why we want to establish the existence of a canon, any canon, in the first place.”

Recognizing the need for achieving a balance when treating feminist perspectives among black women of the Diaspora, Carole Boyce Davies offered theoretical framework that argued for theoretical negotiation as opposed to “against theory” positions. In *Black Women Writing and Identity*, Davies
The prophetic spiritual awakening that West articulated found resonance in popular culture as well. The spirituality and valuation that all embraced was not passive, but proactive in nature and expectant of positive change. In *Think and Grow Rich: A Black Choice*, Dennis Kimbro and Napoleon Hill dedicated an entire chapter to the importance of faith which writers referred to as “the prerequisite to power,” the vehicle, not the destination. They highlighted prominent blacks of the Diaspora who openly acknowledge the importance of “applied faith.” Among those listed were Alex Haley, whose 885-page best-seller, *Roots*, had the largest printing for a hard-cover book in U.S. publishing history; Debbye Turner, Miss America 1990; Joe Frazier, former heavyweight boxing champion; William Tubman, who became president of Liberia; Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize laureate; Barbara Gardner Proctor, founder of Chicago’s Proctor and Gardner Advertising, worth $15 million dollars in 1990; and Oprah Winfrey, television talk-show host and business woman, worth $40 million in 1990.

While Kimbro and Hall address the motivational aspects of faith, journalist Beverly Hall Lawrence underscores “spirit” as a self-affirming, creative force in *Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African Americans Goes Home to Church*. Hall Lawrence suggests that the return to church particularly among middle-class African Americans was directly related to their need to reestablish cultural/spiritual mooring while they embraced

---


the liberationist call for racial uplift. Confirming Joseph Washington’s findings cited in “The Black Religious Crisis,” Hall acknowledges that young African Americans of the immediate post-civil rights era tended to view the black church as a vestige of the past, a crutch that was no longer needed. However, as they moved into largely white corporate America, they found themselves increasingly distanced from the cultural institution that had helped them “define and structure the meaning of blackness.” Reconnecting with the positive aspects of the African American past meant not only returning to the black church but also listening to the elders. Their return was hardly one-dimensional, nor did they listen without a critical ear. While affirming the role of the black church as the most enduring icon of black cultural expression, it also insisted on ferreting out the socio-economic good that the church might provide for its constituents. Recalling the mounting change in perspective among middle-class blacks, Hall Lawrence wrote:

By the time of Calvin’s [Hall Lawrence’s husband] baptism in 1990, I had already witnessed hundreds of young black professionals like us joining churches in the communities where we’d lived. We had been witnesses to faith in Detroit, Ann Arbor, Washington, and now in New York City. In even the most casual social gatherings, there seemed to be questions about faith and discussion of how black churches might be the best spiritual, social, and economic hope for black America.

Even while Hall Lawrence appreciated the spiritual foundation of her youth most notably suggested by “a [huge] Holy Bible in Mama’s house,” she acknowledged a generational change in perspective:

My generation sees little separation between the traditional spiritual function of the church and the need for black political and economic parity. We are demanding that the black church—regardless of denomination—respond, or African Americans risk reenslavement on all fronts.

---

21 Hall Lawrence, 13.
According to Hall Lawrence, Reverend Bryant, of St. Paul AME in Cambridge and Bethel AME in Fall River, Massachusetts, employs the kind of program that she deems most effective. Placing Bryant within the context of his peers, Hall Lawrence notes the following:

Unlike many charismatic movements, which tend to be conservative, the full-gospel preachers like Bryant [are] aggressively liberal, politically and socially. Neo-Pentecostal services contain elements of enthusiasm that are common to black worship in general, but they are more fervent and tend to draw on the black folk tradition, which stresses spirit-filled experiences. One of the appeals of the current movement is its emphasis on a deeper spirituality, the need for a second blessing of the Holy Spirit. John Bryant says that as the fifty-second pastor in Bethel’s two hundred-year history, all he wanted to do was to return to the roots of African American worship.  

The same description applies directly to Houston’s Kirbyjon Caldwell, pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church (affectionately called “the Village”). Trained as an investment banker, Caldwell uses his business skills to oversee the church’s “Power Center,” a church-owned business complex recently acquired and located on South Post Oak at South Main. As the name of the center implies, Caldwell believes that economic strength and spiritual depth are indispensable to the African American community.

While the complex represents Windsor at its prophetic best, the church’s enthusiastic worship services, replete with Pentecostal hymnody and tempi, suggest a congregation determined to “lift the Savior up” in authentic “Holy Ghost” fashion. As I pan the audience spotting friends and colleagues from high school and college, I notice that an auditorium filled with baby-boomers and busters of Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, and Pentecostal descent—all gathered in a church that has come a long way from the Methodist tradition that my parents remember. The confident demeanor and bright-eyed enthusiasm of those gathered suggest a group full of expectation. Their comportment also indicates one weaned on opportunity, “can-do,” and “know-how.” Aware of the church’s interdenominational composition and liturgy, Hanq Neale (of Pentecostal

---

24 Ibid., 88.
descent) playfully welcomes the audience to “Windsor-Village-United-Methocostal- Bapticostal-Church-of-Christ-in-God.”

I must admit that the mainline-Pentecostal preacher’s daughter-musician in me is pleased not only by what she sees, but also by what she feels. Their praises are graced with a familiar presence that we Pentecostals call “the anointing.” I am told by a young woman sitting near me that “the Village” has just ended a revival with COGIC-born Carlton Pearson of Higher Dimensions ministries. I then remember that the congregation has just completed a 40-day fast, an undertaking which suggests a call for contrition and repentance. Even while the church is obviously more socially liberal than most mainline AAPs churches will ever claim to be, a new kind of spirituality pervades this Methodist church and others of its kind—all of which have openly joined the “sanctified folk” in their determination to “work the spirit.”

At the same time, an unprecedented shift is occurring among conservative black Pentecostals. Already veterans of enthusiastic worship and faithful to the priestly mission, they have begun to plan and engage in novel prophetic programs. A.S. Johnson of Back-to-God Revival Church and Bishop Roy Lee Kossie of Latter Day Revival Center are representative of this trend.

Johnson’s renewed mission contains both priestly and prophetic dimensions. While he continues to “preach out churches” in Texas and Louisiana (some fourteen churches are under his leadership), in 1988 he founded a Christian school. Although he had not been formally trained, he related that “God gave [him] ideas and suggestions” that left teachers and administrators who attended conferences of independent schools astonished. As the economic base of Southeast Houston was eroded by the winds of change, so did operational funds. Yet Johnson remained committed to his mission. He

---

25Kathy Taylor and the Choraleers in Concert, Sunday, February 24, 1998, 7:30 PM.
then opened a half-way house for recovering drug addicts, serving over 100 men and women from 1990 to 1994.

Most comfortable in his priestly mission, however, he continues to conduct revivals throughout the state of Texas. He and the members of his church have developed special a relationship with members of the Latter Day Revival Center. For the past four years, Johnson has been the guest evangelist at the church’s now annual summer tent revival. The event has grown from one year to the next. Founder and pastor of the Latter Day Revival Center, Bishop Kossie, could not be happier. Forever reflecting the excited spiritual climate of the Latter Rain Movement in which he was born again, Kossie loves Johnson’s emphasis on good-old fashioned salvation, speaking in tongues, fasting, healing the sick, and casting out devils. The more dramatic the manifestation, the more content both he and Johnson are. Though their ministerial deliveries are different and some twenty-five years stand between their natural births, both recognize that they are cut from the same spiritual fabric. With Kossie, a man in his mid sixties, and Johnson in his mid forties, the two have cultivated a relationship that resembles that of a father and son—an additional son for Kossie who has four natural sons of his own; a spiritual father-figure for Johnson, who appreciates Kossie’s kind, paternal demeanor.

Even while it took Kossie’s congregation a little longer to appreciate Johnson’s heavy-handed style, they were gradually won over by the sincerity and real concern that Johnson showed for them and others during his tent revivals. Unlike many of the increasing number of “buppy” pastors who would not consider wrinkling their Armani suits or of scuffing their Kenneth Coles, Johnson comes dressed with the intent to literally labor with those who attend his meetings. He wears his a signature black robe with red lettering bearing his name and a scripture. When he calls a prayer line, he ministers to people with patience and understanding. The more they need, the happier he is.
Neither the drug addict’s blank look, the prostitute’s sassy demeanor, or the drug lord’s defiant glare phase him in the least. Different from Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates who equated the young urban black man with the alien,\textsuperscript{28} Johnson understands his “cool pose.”\textsuperscript{29} He knows that the marginalized young black man’s posture is part of his survivalist ontology, a symbol of his attempt to “cope with oppression and marginality.”\textsuperscript{30} He further realizes that “the cool pose...is crucial for [the] preservation of pride, dignity, and respect. It is the way for the black male to express bitterness, anger, and distrust toward the dominant society.” The “cool pose” also “works to keep whites off balance and puzzled about the black man’s true feelings.”\textsuperscript{31} Johnson understands that being cool “furnishes the black male with a sense of control, inner strength, balance, stability, confidence, and security.”\textsuperscript{32} Yet Johnson does not forget a stark reality: in a country that cares little about the plight of young black men, their being “real cool” will ultimately lead to their “d[ying] soon.”\textsuperscript{33} Seeing himself in them, Johnson exits the tent to talk to them, embrace them, and pray for them as they stand, perhaps they think, in the safety zone, e.g., behind the fence providing a barrier between the parking lot where the tent stands. His message of deliverance rings out into the night. Meanwhile, curious on-lookers are drawn to the contagious singing and music provided by his son Andrew, Jr., Johnson’s wife and his daughters, one of whom is a talented drummer. Some eventually find their way under the tent to experience up close whatever they have heard from afar.

Often their journeys end on the artificial turf which has replaced the sawdust of the 1950s. The temporary plywood altar functions as a gateway from “a life of sin,

\textsuperscript{28} In \textit{The Two Nations of Black America} (1998), Gates’s televised personal essay on the separation of the black middle and lower classes, Gates stated that the ideological position of a faceless young inner-city male interviewed for the program was far removed from Gate’s own.


\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}

shame, and destruction to one of peace and Holy Ghost power.” As Johnson allows those who have been “touched by the Lord” to testify, the congregation learns gradually of its interdenominational, cross-cultural composition. Surprisingly, the names of popular local Baptist and Methodist churches fall from the lips of some, including Windsor Village, Pleasant Hill, and New Light. Attendees notice that class and denominational barriers have crumbled for a moment under the spirited furor of the revival. Testimonies are shared by the least and the greatest, by the polished and the rugged. Indeed the old-time way was still invoking the new, different, and exciting. In fact, as the table turned, the old-time way gradually found itself reintroduced to a generation that had little knowledge of its vast contribution to present-day African American spirituality. Johnson’s example most certainly helps to inform newcomers of this truth and to jog the memories of saints who lamps may have gone dim. Seeing Johnson in action is believing; and believing is difficult to resist.

When the tent comes down everyone returns to his church “home” or “family.” Meanwhile, Kossie and his forty-four year old congregation prepare to take on new challenges, to acquire additional property, and to construct a youth center. Demonstrating an unprecedented move toward a prophetic church, Kossie begins to attend meetings held by the Fifth Ward Development Corporation (FWDC), including a luncheon with former President Jimmy Carter who is working to build homes in Houston through his highly recognized Habitat for the Humanities program. Showing a fresh respect for the elders, Harvey Clemmons, the young president of FWDC and pastor of the neighboring Pleasant Hill Baptist church, puts Kossie at ease and invites him to attend community-oriented meetings held at his church.

Even though environmental circumstances forced Kossie and his congregation to sustain a “survivalist church” for some forty years, a growing young professional group has given the church more room to maneuver financially. That at least seven of those
participating are Kossie’s children further facilitates the transition. Yet they too are learning to use their secular skills for a prophetic spiritual purpose. Recalling their father’s dream, they realize without trepidation that they are among the children who needed to “grow legs,” that they are a part of the “story that God is telling.” They all renew their commitment to a his narratival theology, one born of his and his wife’s experiences, of theirs, of the members’ of their church. As good as any saga in their estimation, their collective story is one that implies both continuity and change. It is intergenerational and includes a multiplicity of visions within the founder’s vision and beyond. The fantastic visualization of it all has guaranteed action and intrigue. Yet their narrative is simple, open-ended, and positive in that “good” (God) is eternal, and they believe that “good” ultimately wins.

Taking their places at back and center stage, the manager and executive secretary/former manager are helping to modernize the internal workings of the church; another manager contents himself to beautify the church grounds; the two secondary teachers prepare to establish programs to serve children in the community among other pertinent activities; the radio personality keeps the church in tune with Houston’s diverse Christian community; after practicing with the choir and providing the preacher with his “gravy,” the budding scholar contents herself to observe, suggest, and historicize. Meanwhile, the two children from other cities in Texas continue to make their contributions. The COGIC evangelist/realtor from Nacogdoches stops by to encourage the church in its mission. The deacon/ supervisor from Dallas keeps them abreast of inspirational developments at the T. D. Jakes’s Potter’s House. What he does not communicate to them personally, they learn by watching Jakes on Houston’s Channel 14, a TBN affiliate.

With nearly a half-century of revolutionary patience under their sturdy belts, other members of the church also begin to find their places; they too are looking forward

34 Musical accompaniment artfully and strategically folded throughout the pastor message.
to seeing their long-awaited vision come to stellar fruition. Having survived the heat of their inner-city wilderness journey along with their pastor and his family, they are preparing to create their own version of Eden, one where the spirit is always welcome and the move is always on. All they need to do now is “Get Ready!”
CONCLUSION

The journey of black Pentecostals from objects of scorn at beginning of the twentieth century to subjects of history at its end is a compelling story. Perhaps most noteworthy is the degree to which early pioneers instilled in some of America’s poorest and most despised citizens a sense of dignity, pride, and loyalty so strong that they were willing—one generation after another—to endure ostracism from within and without to protect their socio-spiritual cause. Exiting the nineteenth century freed from physical bondage, their fervent embrace of the Old Testament Exodus provided a spiritual and intellectual framework for comprehending their experience in a country determined to complicate their existence.

The importance of “spirit” to their project cannot be overstated. Somehow, early black Pentecostals managed to draw life from notions of spirituality that many outside their community deemed too controversial to appreciate. In the face of modernity, they insisted on nurturing themselves with dreams, visions, and messages that they believed to be divine. They further distinguished themselves from their African American counterparts by embracing an ecstatic form of worship that welcomed body percussion, call-response patterns, and energetic tempi. Leaning heavily on the biblical examples of David and of Paul and Silas, black Pentecostals determined to “praise him in the midnight hour,” i.e., no matter the circumstances. As with other African Americans, history suggests that their period of socio-politico-economic testing was a laborious one, particularly in the early-to-mid-twentieth-century American South. While Jim Crow laws and political disenfranchisement truncated their political power with respect to the dominant culture, African American Pentecostals established churches and church-related organizations that provided meaningful avenues for formulating culture and their own politico-spiritual framework. Essential to African American Pentecostals, however, was
what they termed being “saved, sanctified, and set apart.” More self-affirming than escapist, their effort to be “in this world, but not of it” permitted a positive redefinition of marginality. Having accepted the biblical declaration that “the world loves its own” and would, therefore, “hate them,” they prepared themselves for a bellicose existence, vowing to endure “hardness like good soldiers.”

Equally intriguing was their innovative fusion of American democratic ideals and African concepts of power, spirituality, and consanguinity. All provided just enough flexibility and constancy to protect both human ends of their intergenerational project. The “holy nation” that they created welcomed the participation of the old and young. Their respect for power, spirituality, and kinship also provided the political space to negotiate with dominant (white) and subdominant (black) cultures while carefully safeguarding key spiritual and communal bonds. Acting out their own migratory subjectivity, they legitimized themselves, making it clear from the outset that they would resist being controlled or manipulated by forces—economic or otherwise—unduly critical of their beliefs.

The determination of black Pentecostals to find a nurturing interpretation of divinity that challenged them to become better human beings also warrants noting. While their early social marginality hindered a formalized presentation of their beliefs to those beyond their community, history suggests that black Pentecostals participated in each phase of the greater African American quest for identity, place, economic parity, and respect. As with other African American cultural groups, they engaged survivalist, liberationist, modernist, post-modernist, and womanist strategies at various stages of the twentieth-century African American experience.

Another unique characteristic of the black Pentecostals treated in this study is that they, their forefathers, and -mothers decided to remain in the south and/or migrate further southward and westward although the trend among African Americans for the first half of the century was to move northward or midwestward. By choosing a southwestward
course, early black Pentecostals opened a new narrative that welcomed fresh themes and interpretations. Consequently, they challenged a well-worn historical paradigm, one reinforced by at least two centuries of mounting political tension between Americans residing in the industrial North and those in the agrarian South.

While African American Pentecostals of the Southwest did not wish to duplicate the “unfreedom” inherent in the “the southern way of life,” they, like other immigrants, were attracted to the Southwest by advertisements touting the region as the “land of opportunity.” Texas in particular promised the protection of individual rights, regardless of race, creed, color or nationality. Early pioneers seemed especially determined to hold the region to its promise. They believed wholeheartedly that the southwest constituted a worthy threshing ground for a new spiritual move that was interracial, intergenerational, transdenominational, and gender inclusive.

William J. Seymour, Lucy Farrow, and Charles Mason played key roles in setting the parameters for early black Pentecostalism. While Seymour and Farrow served as catalyzing forces, Charles Mason established an avenue for communicating the Pentecostal message and world view among blacks in the Southwest. Drawing on the African American need for appreciation and politico-cultural valuation, Mason provided a framework for black men and women to test their human potential in the name of God and good. Bishops and missionaries, evangelists and preachers all took pride in working out churches with the approval of their “Chief Apostle,” Charles Mason.

Accompanying Mason were a number of innovative COGIC women who helped disseminated the COGIC message and duplicate its structure throughout the southwest: Lizzie Roberson, Lillian Brooks Coffey, Nancy Gamble, Mattie McGlothen, and Emma Frances Crouch. They and other COGIC women supported the organization not only by bearing and raising COGIC children, but also by organizing activities, fund-raisers, and profitable projects to better the organization and to support its clergy.
While COGIC and other black Pentecostal groups constructed a protective socio-
spiritual haven for themselves, historical evidence suggests they were hardly hiding from
the world. Their goal was not to escape, but to transform and be transformed. They
themselves were spiritually transformed by their conversion experiences and via their
acquaintance with the Holy Spirit. At the same time, they aimed to change the world
around them by establishing churches throughout the nation and engaging in the
evangelical mission. Their emphasis on spirit, notwithstanding, as with other African
Americans of the Post-Reconstruction period, they made an earnest attempt to define
their newfound freedom both economically and socially. Similar to other migrants into
the Southwest, they too sought better jobs and educational opportunities for themselves
and their children.

Contrary to popular belief, African American Pentecostals played an important
role in the African American struggle for civil rights from the early nineteen hundreds
onwards. Bishop Charles Mason, who ordained many white ministers and actively
supported interracial cooperation, was imprisoned for his beliefs and put under
surveillance by the FBI in the early twentieth-century. Bishop L. H. Ford eulogized the
14 year-old African-American youth, Emmett Till, beaten and thrown into a river by
vigilante whites for allegedly flirting with a white woman in Money, Mississippi. Till
and his family were members of the Church of God in Christ in Chicago, Illinois. Faith
Temple COGIC (now known as Child Memorial), Brooklyn, New York, pastored by
Bishop Norman Quick, was the site of Malcolm X’s funeral. Troubled by the
controversy surrounding Malcolm X’s life and assassination (April 21, 1965), many
pastors in the New York feared being associated with the felled leader’s radical agenda.
Further indicating the COGIC commitment to civil rights, Martin Luther King, Jr.,
delivered his last speech at a rally at Mason Temple COGIC (April 3, 1968). King was
assassinated a day later (April 4) as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, the headquarters of the COGIC organization.¹

Despite the extensive contributions of COGIC the Pentecostalism among African Americans, the organization’s authority was challenged after World War II by a second thrust for spiritual independence among blacks desiring to participate in the Latter Rain Movement. Even while those joining the said movement were relieved of COGIC hierarchy, they—now African American Independent Pentecostals (AAIPs)—continued to heed the dual COGIC call for holiness and sanctification. In the late 1940s and early 1950s in Houston, Reverend Arthur Bonds, Bishop H.W. Falls, and Leola Crawford represented this impulse. Yet Reverend Roy and Barbara Kossie’s example suggests that independence engendered new challenges. Because they were not a part of an established structure, their experiences were perhaps more difficult than they might have been had they joined forces with preexisting Pentecostal polities. On the other hand, independence provided the freedom to formulate new interpretations of church work and to enact a different theo-narrative.

In the 1970s, AAIPs were joined by spiritual newcomers who referred to themselves as “Charismatic.” Given their religio-cultural distance from traditional Pentecostals, Charismatics attracted adherents from mainline Protestant and Catholic denominations. Already more secularized than their Pentecostal predecessors, Charismatics helped to modernize Charismatic/Pentecostal ideology by establishing schools and by publishing their beliefs through a variety of media.

By the 1980s modernization, along with its faith in material progress, was complete among Charismatics, black and white, to the degree that many traditional AAIPs believed their counterparts had left the Pentecostal church’s fundamental call for spirituality, holiness, and sanctification. Meanwhile, economic changes within the black

community in the 1980s created two black Pentecostal/Charismatics communities—one the suburban, catering namely to the black middle class; the other, urban, largely serving the inner-city poor.

Suggesting a post-modernist bent, AAIPCs of the 1990s have begun to embrace a prophetic Christianity that seeks both the economic and spiritual empowerment of the laity regardless of its collective socio-economic status. The challenge for them will be to discover ways to establish meaningful relationships across class, generational, and geographical boundaries. An additional AAIPC endeavor will be to engage in ecumenical projects that attempt to build post-ethnic, interdenominational coalitions that in turn effect positive change in the multiple communities served.

While AAIPCs themselves have much to consider, so too do scholars of African American history and culture. Even though black Pentecostalism is nearly a century old, the study of those who nurtured the movement is still in its infancy. To date, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have made the most extensive contributions via their studies of black Pentecostal music and worship modalities. Yet too few works have been dedicated to providing an in-depth understanding of black Pentecostal themselves.

Based on my experience accumulating material for this project, the Church of God in Christ constitutes a fruitful point of departure. As its members are proud to be part of largest black Pentecostal denomination in the world, many have taken the time to write and publish manuscripts shedding light on their participation in, and evaluation of, the internal and external workings of the COGIC church. A strategic collecting of stories from pertinent individuals would permit highlighting patterns that further elucidate the case of African American Pentecostals and their contributions to American culture and society.

In addition, COGIC state histories merit writing so that social scientists may examine pertinent socio-geographical issues, migratory patterns, and their implications.
Biographical/historical studies should be conducted from various geographical points of reference in the following areas: COGIC missionaries; COGIC evangelists; the COGIC Women's Department; COGIC men; the COGIC music department; and COGIC youth. An examination of the COGIC blood connections also warrants consideration.

Studies on blacks affiliated with other Pentecostal groups—e.g., Triumph of the King of God in Christ, United Holy Church of America, and Church of God by Faith—are worthy of similar scholarly evaluation. On Pentecostals in general, the following areas deserve critical attention: the children of the Pentecostals; the wives of Pentecostal preachers; Pentecostals and education; Pentecostals and consumerism; issues of continuity and change in Pentecostal theology and practice. Equally estimable would be to establish an organization and/or library that collects and preserves black Pentecostal memorabilia and publications, and encourages further appreciation and valuation of the black Pentecostal model.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


**Private Papers and Unpublished Works**


_____. Course Outline, "COGIC History at a Glance."

_____. Minutes of Meeting, Wednesday, December 1, 1971.

Carothers, T.C., "The Life of Elder Bonds in Houston." unpublished manuscript.


**Letters**


Newspapers

*The Apostolic Faith*
*Forward Times*
*Houston Chronicle*
*Houston Informer*
*Houston Post*
*Los Angeles Times*

Magazines

*Charisma*
*Christianity Today*
*Ebony*
*Gospel Monthly Magazine*
*Jet*
*Memphis Corporate Salute*
*Profiles*
*Septia*
*Texas Bulletin: A Monthly Magazine of the Church of God in Christ: Texas Jurisdiction*
*Whole Truth*
*Yearbook of the Church of God in Christ*
*Yearbook of American Churches*

Audio Cassettes


Video Cassettes


Jakes, Bishop, “He’s Calling You Out.” Dallas, TX: Jakes Ministries, Wednesday, April 23, 1997, 7:00 PM.


**Church Programs**


**Interviews and Conversations**


____. Conversation with Attorney Althea Bailey, Friday, February 16, 1998.

____. Conversation with Darryl Martin, KWWJ Radio (Gospel 1360), February 20, 1998.


____. Conversation with Menthola Townsend, April 19, 1995.

____. Conversation with Viki Duncan, September 6, 1997.

____. Interview with Sister Ormie Martin, February 20, 1998.


**Secondary Sources**


Hall, Alferd Z., Jr., *So You Want to Know Your Church*. Memphis, TN: Zannju Publication, 1996.


**Articles**


Dissertations


Master’s Theses

APPENDIX I

Pioneers Spreading the Pentecostal Message in the South, West, and Abroad

1900-1905  Before Azusa
South
William J. Seymour - TX

1906-1909  The Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles
South
Charles H. Mason (COGIC) - TN, AL, MS, AK, GA, KY
Mack E. Jonas (COGIC) - GA, KY, MS, AL, TX, GA
Frank Williams (AFMCOG) - MS, AL, TX, LA, GA

West
Emmett Morey Page (COGIC) - TX, NM, LA, KO
Nancy Gamble (COGIC) - TX, KS, NM

Abroad
Lucy Farrow - Monrovia, Liberia

1910-1915  The Azusa Street Revival ended, the Azusa Street Mission Church became predominately black. Before World War I.
South
Hames Hensly (COGIC) - MS, AL, GA
S. Lazard (COGIC) - LA, MS, AL, TX
Saint Samuel (COGIC) - NC, VA, AL, MS, TX, GA
Howard A. Goss (AG) - TX, KS, AK

1The bulk of the information prior to the 1950s was found in Sherry Sherrod DuPree’s African-American Holiness Pentecostal Movement: An Annotated Bibliography (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996) xxxvi - xxxix. Those labeled “Southwest” are additions based on my research.
West

Annie L. Garrett Bailey (COGIC) - TX
Henry C. Ball (AG) - TX, AZ, CA, Mexico

Abroad

Elias Dempsey Smith (TCKOGC) - Ethiopia
Julia W. Hutchins (AFCOG) - Liberia

1916-1922  World War I and afterwards

South

Nathaniel and Delia Scippio (COGBF) - SC, GA, AL, FL, MS, TX
Aaron Matthews (COGBF) - Fl, GA, AL, MS, AK, LA, TX
J.E. Eaton (COGIC) - MS, AL, LA

West

J.A. Blake, Sr. (COGIC) - CA
Samuel m. Crouch (COGIC) - TX, CA, NM, AZ

Abroad

Pearl Teasley (UHCA) & Rosa Lee Wright (PAW) - West Africa
Pearl & Aaron Holmes (PAW) - Liberia
James Salter (AG) - Congo, Africa

1923-1929  Depression in the United States

South

W.M. Ryan (COGBF) - Fl, AL
Bishop H.W. Falls (Worldwide Fellowship)-TX

West

George W. McGlothen (COGIC) - NE, CA, OK
Abroad

R.L. Fidler (COGIC) - Mexico

1930-1944

Before World War II (Nothing on Texas)

Southwest

Reverend Arthur Bonds (AAIP)-TX

Abroad

Elizabeth White (COGIC) - Liberia
Ellen M. Hopkins (PAW) - Liberia
Mattie McCaulley (COGIC) - Trinidad
Cornelius Hall (COGIC) - British West Indies

1945-1950

After World War II

Southwest

Reverend Arthur Bonds (AAIP)-TX
Pastor Leola Crawford (AAIP)-TX
Bishop H.W. Falls (AAIP)-TX
Bishop J.L. Parker (AAIP)-TX

Abroad

Dorothy Webster Exume (COGIC) - Jamaica
Cora Bery (COGIC) - England, Africa
Mother Elise Washington Mason (COGIC) - West Indies, Bahamas, Jamaica

1960s

Southwest

Elder C. C. Driver (AAIP)-Cleveland, TX
Elder Prentice Hobbs (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, Jr. (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Bishop R. Taylor (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Apostle E.W. Wilcotts (AAIP) - Houston, TX
1970s Southwest

Pastor C. B. Arnold (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Pastor Worthy Jennings (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Pastor Ezzie Mae Williams (AAIP)-Houston, TX

1980s Southwest

Pastor Shelton Bady (AAIC)-Houston, TX
Pastors David and Claudette Copeland, San Antonio, TX
Pastor Jessie Donn, (AAIP)-Houston, TX
Montgomery (AAIC)-Houson,TX
Pastor Dorothy Washington (AAIC)-Houston, TX
Pastor Michael P. Williams (AAIC)-Houston, TX
Pastor Rosemary Williams (AAIC)-Houston, TX
Pastor Anoja Ohms (AAIC)- Houston, TX

1990s Southwest

Pastor T.D. Jakes (AAIC)-Dallas, TX Pastor Ed

Abbreviations

AG Assemblies of God
AAIC African American Independent Charismatics
AAIP African American Independent Pentecostals
COGBF Church of God By Faith
COGIC Church of God in Christ
PAW Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
TCKOGC Triumph the King Church of God in Christ
UCHA United Holy Church of America
APPENDIX II

Church of God in Christ
The Presidium, National Officers, and Department Heads: 1897-Present

Presiding Bishops and Chief Apostles

Bishop Charles Harrison Mason 1907-1961
Bishop Thurston Jones, Sr. 1961-1968
Bishop James Oglethorpe, Sr. 1968-1989
Bishop Louis Henry Ford 1989-1995
Bishop Chandler D. Owens 1995-Present

Office of General Secretary

Elder W.E. Holt 1910-1920
Elder J.E. Williams 1920-1934
Bishop U.E. Miller 1934-1963
Bishop J.O. Patterson, Sr. 1963-1968
Bishop D.A. Burton 1968-1976
Bishop W.W. Hamilton 1991-Present

The four departments listed immediately below were organized between 1910 and 1916.

General Supervisors for the Department of Women

Mother Lizzie Roberson 1911-1945
Mother Lillian B. Coffey 1945-1961
Mother Anne L. Bailey 1964-1975
Mother Mattie McClothen 1975-1994
Mother Emma Crouch 1994-1997
Mother W.M. Rivers 1997-Present

---

2 The ensuing lists are found in Alfred Z. Hall, Jr.'s So You Want to Know Your Church (1996).
3 Ibid., 16-21.
5 Ibid., 36-7.
6 Whole Truth, May 1997, cover story.
The International Y.P.W.W. Department—Presidents

Elder M.C. Green 1912-1913
Bishop O.T. Jones, Sr. 1913-1966
Bishop O.T. Jones, Jr. 1966-1968
Bishop C.D. Owens 1969-1973
Bishop W. James 1973-1985
Bishop C.H. Brewer, Jr. 1985-Present

International Sunday School

Professor L.W. Lee 1924-1944
Elder F.C. Christmas 1944-1966
Bishop L.C. Patrick 1968-1992
Bishop C.W. Williams 1992-Present

The Department of Missions

Elder Searcy 1925-1926
Elder C.G. Brown 1926-1937
Bishop S.M. Crouch 1937-1968
Bishop R. Martin 1968-1973
Bishop F.D. Washington 1973-1975
Bishop C.L. Moody, Sr. 1975-Present

The General Treasurer

Bishop A.M. Cohen (dates not provided)
Overseer Chester E. Morgan (dates not provided)
Bishop W.B. Odom (dates not provided)
Bishop T.T. Davis 1980-1992
Bishop S.L. Lowe, Sr. 1992-Present

---

7 Ibid., 31.
8 Jones is credited with having organized the Y.P.W.W. See So You Want to Know Your Church, page 31.
9 Ibid., 32.
10 Ibid., 33.
11 Ibid., 28.
The Financial Secretary

Bishop C.E. Bennett (dates not provided)
Bishop S.Y. Burnett 1976-1993
Bishop F.O. White 1993-Present

Chairman of the Pastors and Elders Council

Bishop W.G. Shipman (dates not provided)
Bishop Riley Williams (dates not provided)
Dr. A.D. Baxter 1976-1988
Elder F. Knight 1988-1991
Elder S. Williams 1992-Present

Department of Music

Mrs. D.M. Patterson (dates not provided)
Mrs. Anna C. Ford (dates not provided)
Mrs. Mattie Moss Clark 1970-1994
Mrs. LuVonia Whittley 1994-Present

The Chairman of the Board of Bishops

Bishop T.D. Iglehart 1960-1964
Bishop L.E. Willis 1964-1968
Bishop J.H. Sherman 1968-Present

First General Board (elected in 1968)

Bishop S.M. Crouch Los Angeles, CA
Bishop J.O. Patterson, Sr. Memphis, TN
Bishop J.S. Bailey Detroit, MI
Bishop O.M. Kelly New York, NY
Bishop F.D. Washington Brooklyn, NY
Bishop L.H. Ford Chicago, IL
Bishop J.W. White Shreveport, LA

---

12 Ibid., 29.
13 Ibid., 30.
14 Ibid., 35.
15 Ibid., 27.
16 Ibid., 24.
First General Board Continued

Bishop D.L. Williams  Norfolk, VA
Bishop J.A. Blake  San Diego, CA
Bishop W. Wells  Greensboro, NC
Bishop C.E. Bennett  Gary, IN
Bishop J.D. Husband  Atlanta, GA

The Chairman of the General Assembly\textsuperscript{17}

Bishop C.S. Coles  1968-1970
Bishop L.E. Willis, Sr.  1982-1988
Bishop F.J. Ellis  1988-present

Department of Evangelism\textsuperscript{18}

Overseer S.T. Samuel (dates not provided)
Bishop L.C. Page (dates not provided)
Elder E.L. Battles  1981-Present

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 34.
APPENDIX III

The following are positions and appointments made by Lillian Brooks Coffey in the 1950s:

Young Women's Christian Council (YWCC), Mrs. Allie Crutcher of Detroit. Chairperson; Young People Willing Workers (YPWW) Chairladies' Unit, Mrs. Jennie V. Hearne of Oklahoma City, Chairperson; Light Burners of Africa and Dark Areas, Miss Edity Cole of Chicago, Chairperson; Volunteer Counselors (Blood Trailers), Mrs. Jeannie Lou Hunter of Illinois, Chairperson; District Missionaries' Unit, Mrs. J. Johnson of New York. Chairperson; Hospitality Group, Mrs. Mattie McClothen of Texas and Mrs. Elizabeth White, Chairperson and Co-Chairperson; Ushers Unit, Mrs. Bertha Polk of Texas, and M.P: Montogomy of Colorado, leaders; Editors and Publishers Units, Mrs. Rose Young Lockett of Kansas, Chairperson (Pioneer Publishers); Religious Education Personality Club (REPC).Mrs. Pearl Roberts McCullom of Indiana, Chairperson; Ministers' Wives' Circle, Mrs. J.O. Mason of Chicago. Chairperson; Bishops' Wives' Circle, Mrs. Deborah Patterson of Tennessee, Mrs. Earnestine Washington of Brooklyn and Mrs. Sadie Brewer of Connecticut, leaders; Stewardess Board. Mrs. Carrie P. Roberts of Chicago, Chairperson; Church Mothers' Unit, Mrs. Birdie Whitehead of Detroit. Chairperson; National Evangelists Unit, Mrs. Retha Herndon of California, Chairperson; Secretaries' Unit, Mrs. Elizabeth Burwell Moore, Chairperson.

The locations delineated suggest that the nexus of COGIC power within the Women's Department shifted mid-westward with Coffey in the 1950s.
APPENDIX IV

I. What African American Pentecostals inherited from the Methodist and Baptist traditions:

Methodists:  
(Theology)  
Perfectionism  
Holiness  
Seminary Required

Baptists:  
(Administration)  
autonomy of the local church  
once saved, always saved  
deacons  
prayer bands  
Sunday School

II. Unique to Pentecostals:

curch mothers  
seminary optional  
fasting  
praying  
tarrying  
exercising the gifts of the spirit  
tongues  
ecstatic worship

III. Below are some differences between COGIC worshippers, Independent Pentecostals, and Charismatics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COGIC</th>
<th>Independent Pentecostals</th>
<th>Charismatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>church mothers</td>
<td>church mothers/seasoned Saints bishops</td>
<td>pastors/teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bishops</td>
<td>ushers</td>
<td>hosts/hostesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ushers</td>
<td>titles de-emphasized</td>
<td>titles non-existent:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>titles important</td>
<td></td>
<td>first name basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musicians</td>
<td>musicians</td>
<td>ministers of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tongues (ecstatic expression)</td>
<td>tongues (ecstatic and interpreted)</td>
<td>tongues (ecstatic and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecstatic worship</td>
<td>ecstatic worship</td>
<td>interpreted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strict structure</td>
<td>loose structure</td>
<td>discouraged, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>praise dancing allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>loose structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Comparative Chart Continued:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COGIC</th>
<th>Independent Pentecostals</th>
<th>Charismatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(organization)</td>
<td>(local church autonomous)</td>
<td>(local church autonomous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total fasting</td>
<td>fasting with water</td>
<td>partial or with water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praying/tarrying</td>
<td>praying/tarrying</td>
<td>praying--&gt;quiet time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at least one hour)</td>
<td>(at least one hour)</td>
<td>(variable lengths)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayer band</td>
<td>prayer band</td>
<td>prayer partner /cell groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shut-ins</td>
<td>shut-ins</td>
<td>forbidden--&gt;the ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstinence from alcohol.</td>
<td>abstinence from alcohol.</td>
<td>forbidden--&gt;the ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigarette, etc.</td>
<td>cigarettes, etc.</td>
<td>Exercising of the gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>premarital sex forbidden</td>
<td>premarital sex forbidden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no exercising of gifts</td>
<td>Exercise the gifts of the spirit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testimony service</td>
<td>testimony service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praise conductor</td>
<td>praise conductor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholistic Preaching</td>
<td>Wholistic Preaching of the Word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praise songs and hymns</td>
<td>praise songs and hymns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Convocation</td>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. Charismatics introduced the following:

Renewed emphasis on the Word as opposed to ecstatic worship
Compartmentalized ministry and preaching, e.g.,
- Prosperity Pastors
- Healing Pastors
- Organized Praise Dancing
APPENDIX V

Black and White Pentecostals: A Comparative Chart of Beliefs

James Tinney noted the following theological differences between blacks (generally followers of Seymour) and whites (generally followers of Parham and others).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blacks/Seymour</th>
<th>Whites/Parham and others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Approach God by praise</td>
<td>Approach God by tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tolerance in theics</td>
<td>Rigid ethical demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tongues a sign</td>
<td>Tongues initial evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consecration</td>
<td>Eradication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Structured services</td>
<td>Unstructured services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dancing and ecstasy</td>
<td>Restrained reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spirit baptism as possession</td>
<td>Spirit baptism as readying for proselyting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Square seating, people facing each other</td>
<td>Seating by rows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Tongues as ecstatic speech</td>
<td>Tongues as foreign languages for preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. No interpretation</td>
<td>Interpretation of tongues required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Experimental biblicism</td>
<td>Inerrant biblicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Healing a gift</td>
<td>Healing in the atonement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Episcopal polity</td>
<td>Extreme independency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Part of continuous church tradition</td>
<td>Restored gospel/church in end times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. General resurrection</td>
<td>Premillenial, pretribulational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Non-dispensational</td>
<td>Dispensational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Salvation improvable</td>
<td>Salvation complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Those who have never heard the gospel will be saved anyway</td>
<td>Those who have never heard the gospel are lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. no special strictures re: dress</td>
<td>Peculiarity of dress demanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Uncertainty re: state of dead</td>
<td>Soul-sleep denied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Anointing: an experience apart from sanctification or Holy Ghost Baptism</td>
<td>Anointing is the baptism of the Holy Ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Separation from Methodists and Baptists not demanded</td>
<td>Come-outism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Christ’s blood won’t blot out sins between “men.”</td>
<td>Christ’s blood blots out all sins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Women can’t perform sacrament or be ordained</td>
<td>Women equal in ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Water baptism pre-requisite for membership</td>
<td>Water baptism unrelated to membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Sacraments</td>
<td>Symbolic ordinances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX VI

Be Healed, Pastor!

by Karen Lynell Kossie

To the humble pastor known by few
To the wounded pastor tried and true
Be healed in Jesus’s name!
To the weary pastor often abused
To the frustrated pastor unjustly accused
Be healed in Jesus’s name!
To the patient pastor
Still waiting to behold
God’s promise to you
And yours unfold
Be healed in Jesus’s name
To the laboring pastor, full of love
Praying diligently to God above
For people far and people near!
Oh, God has counted your every tear,
Be healed in Jesus’s name!
Beloved Pastor,
Be renewed
Be refilled
Be blessed
Be healed!

---

1 Karen Kossie, "Be Healed, Pastor!" (Houston, TX: Ameri-Quest International, 1989)