1984

The Soul of Black Worship

Wyatt Tee Walker

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/rare-bookshelf

Part of the African History Commons, and the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

https://scholarship.richmond.edu/rare-bookshelf/1

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Rare Books at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Rare Bookshelf by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
THE SOUL OF BLACK WORSHIP
Preaching • Praying • Singing
A Trilogy

Foreword by
GARDNER C. TAYLOR
THE SOUL OF BLACK WORSHIP
A TRILOGY
Preaching • Praying • Singing

WYATT TEE WALKER

MARTIN LUTHER KING FELLOWS PRESS® NEW YORK
Dedicated
to the memory
of
Martin Luther King, Jr.
1929-1968
a gifted prince
of the
Black Church.
Other Publications by Wyatt Tee Walker

BOOKS

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH: Past, Present & Future
SOMEBODY'S CALLING MY NAME
CHINA DIARY
THE SOUL OF BLACK WORSHIP
ROAD TO DAMASCUS
OVERCOMING STRESS Contributor
COMMON THIEVES
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS II
GOSPEL IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS III
OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF A REVOLUTIONARY
THE KEIDANREN PAPERS OF TOKYO
AFROCENTRISM AND CHRISTIAN FAITH
THE KING OF LOVE:
   My Days With Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Essays

Nothing But A Man: The Historical Significance of Malcolm X
Crime, Vietnam and God
The Soulful Journey of the Negro Spiritual
The Albany Movement: An Analysis
Liberation Theology and the Conflict in the Middle-East
The Role of the Black Church in the Revolution of the Sixties
Leadership Needs for Tomorrow's Churches
A Tribute to the Mothers of South Africa
Dynamics of African American Worship
Louis Farrakhan: Made in the U.S.A.
South Africa on the Mediterranean
Impact of Martin Luther King in Social and Public Policy

*Scheduled for release late Fall 1990
AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This work is only the refinement of the original lectures delivered at the 1983 session of the Hampton Institute Ministers' Conference. How I wish I could reproduce the fervor and spirit we shared those several days last summer. I have been faithful to the text of the original lectures with only some minor changes to make for smoother reading. Naturally, what appears here reflects in mode and style my close kinship with the arena of Black worship.

No manuscript of this length can be considered exhaustive. It is my hope that reducing these lectures to some permanent form will induce some discussion and response to three vital areas of the Black religious experience.

I wish to express my thanks to the Hampton Ministers' Conference, at large, for the inspiration and nurture it has provided my ministry for more than thirty years. Especially am I grateful for the invitation extended to me by President George A. Crawley and M.A. Battle, our executive secretary. The unsung hero of this effort is Dr. William "Bobby" McClain, a member of the faculty at John Wesley Seminary in the nation's capital. In January of last year, when I shared
with him this much-coveted invitation, he gave me his very helpful monograph on Black worship from which the title of this work is drawn.

Mrs. Lorraine Springsteen, my personal secretary for more than eighteen years, has been faithful in typing the several revisions of the original lectures and timely in meeting deadlines set by the author. My wife and sweetheart of thirty-four years, Theresa Ann Walker, provided me with helpful criticism during the revision process and was good enough to take time to proofread the galleys of the final manuscript.

Had it not been for the facility of the Martin Luther King Fellows Press, a subsidiary of our academic society, it would have been impossible to have produced this volume with such dispatch. I thank our President, Henry H. Mitchell and the Martin Luther King Fellows for the use of the imprimatur of its publishing division.

Last but not least, I am grateful to the members of the Canaan congregation who always provide me with ample time away from them to accomplish meaningful tasks such as this.

Wyatt Tee Walker
Canaan Baptist Church of Christ
New York, N.Y.
Spring 1984
FOREWORD

Lecturers at the Hampton Institute face one of the largest and most vibrant religious audiences to be seen anywhere in America. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, the widely known pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, New York City and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Freedom National Bank, in 1983 became a part of that distinguished series and now publishes his enthusiastically received lectures as "The Soul of Black Worship."

Here we are treated to an interesting, different facet of the Wyatt Walker personality. In his Somebody's Calling My Name, the author presented the result of painstaking research and a style both scholarly and graceful. In The Soul of Black Worship we have a much more informal, reflective reverie on the trinity of spiritual gifts and expressions which has been the foundation, the force and the flight of black worship. Dr. Walker points out that preaching in black worship is an inspired extension of personality, that prayer in black worship rises on the wings of petition and trembles and thrills in the upper summits of thanksgiving and that singing in black worship is the language of the soul when ordinary speech falters and fails.
The best part of this book, one thinks, is the insight it gives into the incandescent personality of Wyatt Walker. In page after page one sees the bold, one had almost said, "saucy," innovative, warm, richly talented figure of the author, touching the life and thought of his generation at so many points and so creatively. Speaking of personality, it is in mystery of personality on fire with God reaching out to other personalities waiting to be kindled that the wonder of black worship at its best occurs. That experience stands solitary in the religious exercises of the human race. *The Soul of Black Worship* places us all in debt to author, to book and to those of whom it speaks.

Gardner C. Taylor
Brooklyn, N.Y.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREACHING: The Heart of Black Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAYING: The Strength of Black Worship</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGING: The Joy of Black Worship</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEX</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

No one needs to be struck by a two by four to recognize that the character of Christian worship in Afro-American churches is inherently different from that observed in churches of the dominant community. A more blunt way of expressing that same truth is to say that Black folk's worship (praise of God) is vastly different from white folk's worship. That is not to say that one or the other is necessarily superior or inferior to the other; only to establish difference.

The root of this difference is in our peculiar social history. For nearly two hundred and fifty years, we were subjected to the most brutal and obscene form of human bondage in the history of mankind. Following the end of the Civil War, with only the short respite of Reconstruction from chattel slavery, we were plunged into the quagmire of legal segregation sanctioned by the highest court in the land (*Plessy vs. Ferguson* 1896). The system of segregation shaped the social mores of this land as they relate to black and white relations. Its legal sanction was not ended until the Supreme Court decision of 1954 (*Brown vs. Board of Education*) but no real effect was felt or observed until Martin Luther King, Jr. and his non-violent devotees swept through our Southland. Quite like a century ago, we enjoyed the brief euphoria of the late 50's and early 60's, with rapid cosmetic changes in America's social arrangement. It did not last any longer than Reconstruction. Richard Nixon came to power and the fortunes of Black people have been in general decline ever since. If you hold reservations about this assess-
ment, check the statistical census of the National Urban League over the last ten years. I am sure this report grates on your sensibilities because things are probably greatly improved for some individuals, but for most Black folks, things are worse.

How is it then, that this Black community has been able to resist and weather, over and over again, the continuous assault on our personhood inflicted by the systemic racism of American society? The answer, undoubtedly is the nature of our religious faith, ninety-five percent of which finds expression in Protestant Christianity in some form or fashion. Eugene Genovese, a Marxist historian, spent nearly 11 years doing a historico-economic study of American slavery.¹ Along the way, he wondered, 'how was it that Black people could have survived the inexpressible cruelties of the slave system?' And then, looking at it from the internal evidence, as the slave community perceived slavery, he concluded that the only way Black folks were able to get through slavery was by means of their religious practice. Now, a Marxist historian's conclusions have considerable objectivity since he doesn't have much truck with our God thing. However, he was so impressed by the quality and the substance of Black folks' religion in slavery that he named his monumental work after a Negro Spiritual, *Roll, Jordan, Roll!*

It is no different today than it was in slavery times. The vitality of Black Church life and Black Worship which accompanies it, is a tribute to Him who is worshipped and they who worship Him. In the best of times, which have been few, and in the worst of times,
which have been many, the Black Church has sheltered its followers from a thousand demons unleashed by racism in America.

Our peculiar social history has finely honed our worship skills. Who knows better than we that "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform..."? Who knows better than we that "The Lord is my light and my Salvation...whom shall we fear..."? Who knows better than we how "to sing the Lord's song in a strange land...?" No wonder! No wonder! No wonder! Many church services break up when somebody starts to sing:

"If it had not been for the Lord on my side (Tell me!) Where would I be? Where would I be?

Thus the peculiar social history of Black people and the dynamics of Black religious faith (to differentiate from white religious faith) have produced an amalgam of religious experience that warrants attention, scrutiny and analysis that can be instructive to the larger Christian community.

It is my view, to which a goodly number subscribe, that in Black Worship, there exists three primary support systems, preaching, praying and singing. These are not the only ingredients, but certainly, the essential ingredients. Authentic Black Worship does not proceed unless these three ingredients are present and operative in some fashion. All have elements of each other. Until I began my doctoral studies in 1972, I had assumed that the progression of our religious
development began with preaching, followed by singing and praying in some uncertain order. How great my error! Singing preceded preaching on the North American continent, as the first by-product of the oral tradition that survived the barbaric Atlantic slave trade. Thus preaching and praying are colored by the idiom of that folk base in song.

The umbrella title for these lectures is The Soul of Black Worship. It is an attempt to underscore the uniqueness of the Black religious experience within the social context mentioned above. I have arbitrarily narrowed the discussion into three papers as follows: Preaching - The Heart of Black Worship; Praying - The Strength of Black Worship; and Singing - The Joy of Black Worship.

Let me be the first to confess, that none of that which is set forth here is intended to be exhaustive. Since there are some parameters of time that I am bound to respect, neither can my remarks be considered all-inclusive. There is not very much that is original. What I have to say is a part of our collective experience. My assignment is to get the discussion started about an area of our activity which has never been matched in attention with what it has measured in importance. All of us will benefit from our time together, if these papers make us think a little more seriously about the task that is ours as worship leaders and worshippers.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer. Amen."
CHAPTER ONE

1

PREACHING

THE HEART OF BLACK WORSHIP

"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Romans 10:14

The whole arena of Black preaching as a distinct discipline was plowed as new ground by Henry H. Mitchell, now the Dean of the Graduate School of Religion at Virginia Union University. More than anyone else in recent times, he has arrested our attention and appreciation in literary form for that which is all-consuming in our interest and calling.

Let me begin with a disclaimer of sort. Preaching in the Black religious experience, that is, in the folk church, has been and is primarily oral in function and practice. The tradition out of which it developed as an art form is an oral tradition. Thus I want to make early mention of the difficulty to subject to analysis that which is oral on that basis of that which is literary or written (the accepted benchmarks of the West). My views are divided into three general categories. First, the Black Preacher Figure, the person; secondly, the Roots of Black Preaching, its origin and source, and
third, the Craft of Black Preaching, what it is and how it gets done.

I. The Black Preacher Figure

Sermons do not come out of the air, although sometimes when you are on the receiving end, it seems so. They are the extension of the preacher-person. Any analysis of the sermon in the Black religious experience must begin with the Black preacher. The King era moved the Black preacher to center stage once again in the public mind. It should be noted that he (or she) was always center stage in the community's mind, due to the unique nature of task and function.

There's a striking parallel between the African priest-doctor and the Afro-American pastor. Each presides over and is involved in the life crises of the people he serves: birth, death, sickness, puberty, trouble, domestic discord, marriage, etc., etc. The renaissance of interest in the Black preacher as a central figure in the affairs of Black people has created a parallel interest in his craft, preaching. Whatever else he may do, the folk base has been primarily, the preaching of the sermon.

It might be helpful to look at this phenomenon a little more closely. There is no dispute that preaching is essential and central in the Black religious experience. It follows then that the preacher is the central figure. The combination of the centrality of preaching and the dominance of the preaching person has left an indelible imprint on the style and content of the Black church enterprise, the institution of primary influence among Black folks.
Historically, the Black preacher has been the most revered figure in the Black community, a statement which by itself is a social commentary on the Black church enterprise. The Black preacher fired the hopes and aspirations of the oppressed community and became, in turn, a symbolic "medicine man" for all the ills that occur. The influence of the Black preacher in coloring the religious life of Black people is inestimable. It is understandable then that the Black preacher becomes the focus of much severe criticism that indicted the gospel he preaches as being other-worldly in character.

The lies Western historians printed about our physical bondage in this republic so effectively camouflaged the stark reality of slavery that America has never had an honest appreciation for the absolutely crucial role that religion played in the life of the ante-bellum and post-Civil War Black community. Read carefully accurate descriptions of the slave and postwar circumstances, and you will find them so oppressively cruel and inhumane across the board that if Black preachers had not universally convinced the slave community that a better day was coming "bye and bye" there might have been mass suicides or something far worse.

The preaching and theology of Black preachers, with all the imperfections, gave cohesion and commonality to an oppressed people. It seems from this vantage point of history that sheer genius coupled with the providence of Almighty God enabled Black people to survive slavery at all. Beyond surviving the slave experi-

7
ence, Black folks emerged from their collective traumatic experience with a clearer conception of the Jesus-faith than the master from whom they learned His name.

The substantive role of the Black preacher has changed little since slavery. The task remains essentially the same: to provide a sense of hope in a hopeless situation. The pain-predicament of Black people remains constant, only the time and places have changed. Need I remind you that Ronald Reagan is in the White House and God is still on the throne. The Black Preacher stands between those two juxtaposed truths. The otherworldliness of Black folk religion is necessary because this world (slavery, segregation, Reagan and racism) is unbearable. The Black preacher-person, if he (she) is anything, is existentialist in matters of faith and the centerpiece of his proclamation is the theological conclusion of our slave ancestors - "I know de udder worl' is not like dis!"

II. Roots of Black Preaching

Let me say a word about Black preaching and its relationship to the African oral tradition. Western historians, in my judgment, are the chief scoundrels of racism. A calculated and premeditated distortion of history has been a dominant corrupting influence that strengthened racism. Their deed is all the more infamous because they knew better. Most historical accounts of the Black man's sojourn in this land would have you believe that, in addition to slavery not being really bad, it was also providential that we were introduced to Christianity through the slave system and "saved from heathen-
ism.' It is very clear that whatever begrudging concessions are made by white folks about the genuineness of Black religious expression, they always add that it would have never come to pass except for the "discovery" of God through Christianity. Those who hold this view have been seriously misinformed and are naive about the development of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. There are several examples of internal evidence in the Bible itself which flies in the face of the view that there has been no African input in the development of Christianity.

. . . When you think carefully about it, you'll realize that Moses was an African — born, bred and died an African. The Ten Commandments that played such a crucial role in transforming the ex-slaves of Egypt into the nation of Israel have their roots in Egypt and Egypt is in Africa. The Biblical narrative tells us Moses received them up on Mount Sinai. However, if you look at the Egyptian Book of the Dead, you will see that ten of them are exactly like the Ten Commandments Moses said he got from the Lord on Sinai. It is not really important whether Moses smuggled them out of Egypt or received them in Sinai, the Ten Commandments are good commandments! It is evident that at least two of them were in force before the Exodus. "Thou shalt not kill, the basis of Moses' first flight from Egypt and "Thou shalt not steal" — Aaron was caught dipping into the Pharoah's treasury. Thus it is patently clear that African influence was operative at the beginning of what has become the Hebraic-Christian tradition.

The New Testament has at least one implicit
reference that fixes our Lord way over on the color scale. You may recall that the angel told Joseph to flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s edict to slay all newborn males. One must remember that the Egyptians of the first century A.D. were dark-skinned. The complexions of North Africa did not lighten up until six hundred years later when Mohammed and his Arab legion swept across the continent. Everyone knows that it would be difficult to hide a blue-eyed blonde baby in Harlem. Further, in the most critical period of Christianity’s development, the era of the Church Fathers, ten of the most prominent apologists for the new faith were indigenous African-Black men. Among these were Origen, Tertullian and of course, the Bishop of Hippo, Augustine. The African input in the development of the Christian faith has been significant.

The New World Africans who comprised the slave community were intensely religious before Christianity was introduced to them formally. The monotheism of West African traditional religions provided fertile ground for the development of the “invisible church,” that family of faith which had no physical structures for their services. Rather, they met in unused tobacco barns, down in the canebrake or brush arbors of the plantations, away from the surveillance and monitoring of the “big house.” The potential for the “invisible church” existed long before slaves appropriated the Jesus-faith and produced Black Christianity, which is something altogether different from white Christianity.

Monotheism was not new to us. Europeans were naive and in error in interpreting the ceremony and
dynamics of traditional African religion. They confused ancestor reverence for ancestor worship; they mistook the intermediaries of the High God for lesser gods and assumed we were polytheistic. The point I am making is that slavery was no stroke of Providence by which we found our way to the true and living God. We knew Him as early as the fifth century A.D. while our bastard cousins were dressed in animal skins and living in caves in central Europe.

I do not want to obscure my point. The Jesus-faith, new to the transplanted African, had fertile ground in which to grow and develop because we possessed a religious heritage founded on the one-God principle. Christianity might not have taken hold as it did, had we not had a theological orientation of the High God and the concomitant world-view of nature and man. It was that part of our African heritage which was most difficult to destroy. The oral tradition preserved our spirituality and nurtured our newly-found Jesus-faith. Any superficial study of traditional West African religions will quickly reveal that there is no such thing as a non-religious African. The great reservoir of West African culture; art, music, dance, folk wisdom, is traditional African religion. And that religion has been preserved, not in writing, but in the oral tradition, passing from one generation to another.

The Western world is heavily oriented toward written history. That is why I mentioned that earlier disclaimer, which is the Western style. The African, of which we are part - our roots - is heavily oriented toward the oral tradition. That is the African style. You
must always remember that man spoke before he wrote.

All that I have said in this regard, is simply to establish in an introductory manner the wellspring out of which the Black preaching phenomenon is born. Its root and soil is the oral tradition of Mother Africa. The natural affinity to the oral tradition, the survival of religious ceremony, the moan/chanting style of our preaching, praying and singing, the social organization (the preacher in Black community today is the chief-figure), the enforced servitude, the continuing Black condition - these ingredients have jelled in a confluence that has produced the Black preaching phenomenon.

It is the Black preaching phenomenon, its authenticity and legitimacy, verified by its track record in mobilizing humanity, that claims our attention and scrutiny with a view toward making it work better for liberation.

III. The Craft of Black Preaching

Our final consideration in this chapter is the craft of Black preaching. Some attempt ought to be made to describe it so you will know it when you hear it or see it. The discussion that follows is more suggestive than definitive. Whether you are preacher or preachee, these signposts will help you to verify and authenticate that Black preaching is in process. In the white religious experience, despite the same parallels that exist, it is primarily spectator-oriented. The congregation sits and listens. However, Black preaching is always dialogue. The congregation participates in the preaching.
In a religious context, Preaching is our literature. A study and analysis of the content of Black preaching will reveal much about us as a people. It details our hopes and aspirations, our fundamental responses to the changes in our lives, the facility with which we cope with life crises, etc. It is an accurate profile as is our music but of greater importance because of the centrality of preaching in the Black religious experience. It proceeds with the approbation of its hearers.

Let me say one further word. It is absolutely essential to understand that Black preaching is aimed primarily at the ear as the route to the heart, as over against being aimed at the eye as the route to the mind. Black preaching is far more oratorical than it is literary. You will enjoy it much more if you hear it than if you read it. When one considers the oral tradition of Afro-Americans, I suppose that fact is probable and predictable.

Well, back to the signposts that indicate Black preaching is in process. I would like to suggest an arbitrary division of the fundamental characteristics of preaching into substantive characteristics, the essence of preaching, and the superficial characteristics. The substantive characteristics have to do with the stuff of Black preaching, the content. The superficial characteristics have to do with the mode or form of Black preaching. In addition to the delineation that I shall make about the superficial and the substantive, which is not exhaustive, there are a few support mechanisms that are present in the Black preaching process that are worthy of notice.
A. Superficial Characteristics

Let us turn to the superficial characteristics of Black preaching first. Black preaching is Antiphonal. I alluded to this earlier in this paper when I suggested that Black preaching is more dialogue than monologue. One might say that Black preaching is cast in the responsorial mode. This is an evidence of continuing African survival. The three support systems of Black worship - preaching, praying, and singing - if authentic, are all cast in the responsorial mode. This is the primary evidence of the impact of the oral tradition in African-American culture. One of the primary characteristics of African music is the Call and Response. The Call or first line is given by the leader; the response is made by the chorus. The combination of rhythm and the use of the call and response device provide the base of the music of the Black religious experience. It is the original music-form, the Spiritual, that so heavily influenced the development of the style and form of the folk preacher. It was largely aided and abetted by the Call and Response.

In practice so far as preaching is concerned, it is more accurately called "the refrain." The preacher establishes the "refrain" as the call, and the congregation repeats the "refrain" as response.

Not long ago, a guest preacher friend of mine was preaching the classic Bible parable of the Prodigal Son. As he drew near the climax of his sermon, he set forth that "the Father sat on the porch for three days, but the boy didn't come home. But the Father kept on waiting. A week passed and the boy didn't come home. But the
Father/kept on waiting. A month passed and no son. But the Father/kept on waiting. Three months passed and no son; but the Father/kept on waiting. A whole year went by and the son didn't come home. But the Father/kept on waiting.'' By this time my congregation was interjecting, "'kept on waiting'' in the pause after, "'But the Father-kept on waiting]!''' The Call and Response is an integral part of the Black preaching phenomenon.

A second superficial characteristic is that of being poetic and rhythmic. The Black preacher stands alone in this regard. The combined use of that which is both poetic and rhythmic has been marvelously captured by James Weldon Johnson in God's Trombones. The imagery is so creative and original that it escapes analysis. For instance, when Rev. "White Brother" is preaching, he simply mentions "'the rising of the sun.'" But when "'old Rev.'" talks about the sun rising, he is apt to say, "'I looked and saw the first thin pencil-line of dawn and watched God's ball of fire seek its noon meridian, continue its relentless journey to the twilight and then lay down to sleep beyond the western hills.'" Nobody can say that quite like the Black folk-preacher.

Black folk-preaching is repetitive in character. Here again is a direct transfer from our music. In our pre-literate experience as antebellum slaves, you must remember that English was a foreign language to the New World African. All Africans had their own language. Slaves were distributed around the plantations of
the South with careful regard that there was no com­monality of language. This was aimed at minimizing the occurrence of rebellion. Our ancestors were forced to learn the "pidgin English" of the masters. In doing so, it was necessary to develop a device for rote memory, since there was a strict prohibition (death) against slaves learning to read or write. Thus, the oral tradition mentioned earlier in this paper was a domi­nant influence in the development of our folk-music. That folk-music, the primal art-form of African-Americans, is highly repetitive in character. The trans­fer from the music of the Black religious experience not only imparted to preaching the sing-song intonation but also the repetitive character.

Black preaching is *climactic*. In our professional jargon, we preachers talk about "the preaching-act." I think the phrase should be hyphenated because it is an act in the dramatic sense. The Black folk-preacher is our great dramatist. He is, in fact, the Shakespearean actor of our culture. No one can tell a story quite like the folk-preacher and make you see it. During our last year's convocation in this place, I shared with you that moment when God became most real to me in the chapel of Virginia Union University one Thursday morning. Dr. Gardner Taylor was preaching. As he was bringing the Prodigal son home, he did so with such vividness and power that I found myself along with others, looking back over my shoulder to see if he was coming down the aisle of Coburn Chapel. There is a genius in drawing a word-picture so powerful that the hearers are on the verge of expecting something to
materialize. So like show business, most folk-preachers have a big finish.

Many years ago, in quiet conversation with Martin Luther King, Jr., he asked, "Wyatt, what's the first thing you think about when you get ready to prepare a sermon?"

I responded quickly that it was difficult for me to begin "if I didn't have my 1,2,3," - that is, my homiletical outline.

I shall never forget his comment: "The first thing I think about is how I'm going to close."

Another superficial characteristic is intonation. Within the craft of preaching, when we are describing another preacher's style, we might say, "He's got a nice hum." That is the pronounced sing-song style so commonplace in folk-preaching. This characteristic is known in some circles as "whooping." For the purposes of this paper, let us refer to it as intonation. The execution of the intonation is as broad as the variety of preachers available. Every preacher has his (or her) own distinctive "hum."

Finally, so far as the superficial characteristics are concerned, Black preaching is often spontaneous. In the midst of the preaching-act, the practitioner of our craft is apt to do almost anything that helps get the point across. A couple of years ago, I was in Memphis in revival with my great and dear friend K.T. Whalum. Like most preachers, I have a sermon on Job. I had my
refrain going with God asking Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world? If you know Job, answer me! Who taught the hawk to fly and made the eagle strong? If you know Job, answer me! Do you know how to make snowflakes? If you know Job, answer me! When I reached the climax, Job was apologizing to God and made his classic declaration of trust and confidence in God - "In all my appointed time, I'm going to wait till my change comes." At that point in the sermon, to exaggerate the "wait" of the text, I stretched out across the pulpit floor and laid down. I had not planned to do that, but under the spell of preaching and the frenzy of the moment, I spontaneously dramatized what I was describing in the story of Job.

This seems as appropriate a spot as any to mention briefly some of the support mechanisms that are present in the arena of Black preaching. It is my guess that they are related more to the superficial characteristics than those that are substantive.

Most preachers have some identifying mannerism. Some wear dark glasses. Others dress in a style that borders on the bizarre. Some enter the worship service on the third stanza of the first hymn. I'm one of them. My members ask me why it is I come in on the third stanza of the first hymn. The explanation is simple and practical. We usually have prayer with the choirs and officers before service. During the processional, I get a chance to take care of my personal needs. By the time I get straight, the choirs and congregation are on the third stanza of the first hymn. Thus, the people associate my
entrance with the third stanza of the first hymn.

The *pace* of preaching is another one of the support mechanisms of the folk preacher. When I say *pace*, I do not mean, alone, the rate at which the words are delivered for emphasis, but also the inflections of the voice, higher or lower. I mention the use of rhetoric earlier; there are some Black preachers who have the gift of making the ordinary sound so extraordinary.

*Dress* is a support mechanism. Some preachers wear white suits all the time or black silk suits all the time. My colleagues in Harlem accuse me of being a cult leader because my pulpit garb is so different. I wear fitted Anglican cassocks topped with a Roman Catholic scapula. I make the sign of the Cross, lay on hands sometimes, annoint with oil. I must say candidly that whatever the dress, it touches on the techniques of "attention-gathering," and being dramatic.

The final support mechanism is the *dramatic pause*. Frequently, I preach against the numbers traffic in New York because the numbers and the drug traffic generally complement each other. I am aware that too many of my members play the numbers. At some point in my sermon, I may say, "I wish the members of this church would stop playing the numbers!" Then I look at the ceiling so that no individual member will suppose that I am looking at her or him. That's an example of *dramatic pause*.
B. Substantive Characteristics

Although listing of the substantive characteristics of Black Preaching might be sufficient, a brief word about each will prove instructive.

*Bible-based.* Black preaching has always had a quality of deep Biblicism. Authentic preaching in the folk tradition comes out of the Bible. Now, I know who Dietrich Bonhoeffer is, and I am reasonably familiar with the writing and thought of Paul Tillich and the Barthian theologians on the Continent; but when I get to the pulpit of that old theater that houses our congregation in the center of Harlem, I seldom make any reference to those gentlemen. The central focus of my preaching is Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, buried and risen on the third day morning, and the contemporaneous application to whatever my parishioners' circumstances may be. Occasionally, I might refer to the *New York Times* or *Time Magazine* but not often. The emphasis is on the *Book* because the folk know the *Book*. Their view is from the inside out. The people are in the *Book*!

*Cross-centered.* There is some continuing criticism against Black clergy for "always taking us to the Cross." You will remember that Paul did say it was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks but unto them that believe it is the power of God unto salvation. The hymn writer was correct:

*Jesus, keep me near the cross;*
*There a precious fountain,*
*Free to all a healing stream,*
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

In the Cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever,
Till the raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.  

The glory of Christ is in the Cross! Not by force of arms, nor fascination of ritual, glamour of learning and philosophy, has the gospel, whose chief expression is the cross of shame, entered into human life and transformed it; but by its own inherent power. Warring only against sin, the gospel has lifted human life to higher levels, working moral miracles, glorifying everyday existence. The spiritual perception of the Black folk preacher has been 20/20. We know that man who died on a cross outside the city wall has the power to transform life.

Contemporary-interpretation. There is a sermon I preach, entitled "Be Careful Who You Try To Hang!" It is the story of Esther in the Old Testament. Haman is the evil viceroy of the king of Persia whose hatred of the Jews is so deep that he concocts a plan of genocide which includes the hanging of Esther's cousin, Mordecai. Mordecai was the spiritual leader of the Jews in captivity according to the narrative, and when Esther became the new queen of Persia, Mordecai advised her not to reveal that she was Jew. When Haman's plan of genocide reached Mordecai, he sent word to her that now is the propitious moment for her to reveal her Jewish descent and seek to save her people. It is at this point that the contemporaneous interpretation comes into play. As Esther deliberates about the great risk
involved in revealing her ethnic identity and the possible loss of her queenship, I describe that moment in this manner:

"Esther goes into her walk-in closet and looks at the gowns designed by Balenciaga and Yves St. Laurent; then she turns quickly to the window and sees her silver-grey Mark VI sitting in the driveway of the palace and wonders how on earth can I give up all this."

That is contemporizing Scripture.

*Faith-filled.* Now this characteristic of Black preaching may fly in the face of some who are intellectually oriented. However, the Biblical story of Job raises the ultimate question of all human life. The ultimate question that Job raises is, ‘Is the universe friendly?’ Job was trying hard to find out. He had been a good man and then all hell broke loose in his life. If you look at the theological interpretation of Job, it is asking, ‘What is the answer to trouble and pain and affliction in life?’ The answer is that there is no answer! Black people have survived in the hell of the North-American experience because they have been involved in the Job-syndrome. Do you remember the Spiritual "You got shoes, I got shoes, All God's chillun got shoes...?" and nobody had shoes? But their hope and aspiration was that there would be a day when they would have shoes; and if not them, then their children or their children's children. The answer is that there is no answer. The only way an oppressed people can survive is through
making practical use of the Job-syndrome. Thus Black preaching has always been faith-filled.

Other-worldly. The Black preaching tradition is marked by this characteristic also and thereby remains open to the persistent criticism that it is irrelevant to the real world in which the devotees exist. Black preachers are excoriated for talking about "pie in the sky." To some degree that is accurate but it is not the total picture. The Black preacher only reflects the nature of the folk-religion. It is other-worldly. There are experts who have analyzed the Spirituals, the primary base of Black people's folklore after the Bible, and one of the criticisms is that they, too are other-worldly. The Spiritual-base is other-worldly and should be. It cannot help but be. The nature of religion itself at bottom, possesses an abiding concern with the metaphysical aspects of life after death.

In a more practical vein, consider again, the world in which the slaves had to exist; being sold at the auction block, women always privy to the lustful desires of the masters and overseers, children forcibly separated from kith and kin, feet being chopped off for escape attempts, and so on. When you consider the real world in which the slaves had to exist, their music and faith of necessity had to be other-worldly. If you consider the world in which Black people exist today in America, June 7, 1983, I am sure I could not make it if I didn't have the religious faith that was other-worldly, giving me the assurance that there is some hope beyond this vale of tears. When one considers what this world is
like, if religion is to serve any purpose at all, it has to have some other-worldly character.

*Eschatological.* This characteristic is directly related to the previous one. Eschatological is a theological word. *Eschatos* in the Greek means ultimate. Thus eschatological has to do with those things that have to do with the final judgment - "when we close up the hymn book for the last time, no more prayers will be said, my eyes will be closed in death, my tongue clings to the roof of my mouth and we all go home to meet Jesus" - that's eschatological! In the judgment, the oppressors are going to get what's coming to them; the wicked shall cease from troubling and weary shall be at rest. This is part and parcel of the other-worldly character of Black preaching. The eschatological character is intertwined with the other-worldly in the spiritual, "God's gonna destroy this wicked race and raise up a nation that will obey. In the Judgment, you're going to reap what you sow!

Now, if I may recap, I have talked about the unique phenomenon of the Black Preacher-Figure, the Roots of Black Preaching and the Craft of Black Preaching. If the sermon is our literature - and it is - then we must seek to permanentize it by the standards of the West, since this is where we are at this point in time. The magic of electronic gadetry makes this infinitely more easy than it has ever been. Make a record of our preaching that issues out of the oral tradition and then preserve it accurately with transcriptions that generations unborn will rise up and call us Blessed. In the western world, legitimacy goes hand in hand with the written record.
We need to make our own record. We are keepers of the flame.

"Go, preach My gospel saith the Lord; 
Bid the whole earth my grace recieve 
He shall be saved that trusts my word, 
And he condemned who'll not believe.

"I'll make your great commission known; 
And ye shall prove my gospel true 
By all the works that I have done, 
By all the wonders ye shall do.

Teach all nations My command; 
I'm with you til the world shall end; 
All power is trusted in My hands; 
I can destroy and I defend."
"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Psalm 12:1,2

Let me say at the outset of this second chapter that all of us owe a great debt to Harold Carter of the New Shiloh Baptist Church in Baltimore, for his pioneer work, The Oral Tradition of Black Prayer. If you have not availed yourself of the opportunity to read this important volume that has zeroed in on this arena of our religious tradition, I recommend that you add it to your personal library and urge others to read it. I do not know of a better work on the subject.

A second support system of Black Worship is praying. The definitions of prayer are myriad. Suffice it to say here, that prayer is the act of lifting one's consciousness to God in some physical and/or verbal manner whose end is to blend the worshipper's will with that of the omnipotent God. It (praying) is the means by which we "talk" with God and the medium by which he answers directly and indirectly the petitions of the heart and spirit.

In the initial paper, I set forth the relatedness of these three support systems under our scrutiny. "All have elements of each other" and all share a direct
link to the oral tradition of West Africa. I suggested also that "Authentic Black worship does not proceed unless these three ingredients are present and operative in some fashion." I am not completely sanguine as to the specific order of their development although I am most sure that singing preceded preaching and praying. Praying and preaching most likely developed in parallel fashion close on the heels of the creation of our original base-line music artform, the Spiritual. To be sure, in our music as in our preaching, there is prayer-content. The attempt to establish a precise order is far too esoteric for the parameters of this essay.

One other reference is needful. Praying, as in the instance of the other two disciplines, has been colored by that same peculiar social history mentioned earlier. The subject and content of Black people's praying was (is) set by the social conditions that surround us. The prayers of our antebellum ancestors evidence an insatiable appetite for freedom (political liberation). The sociological circumstance directly influenced the construction of the prayer utterances, then and now!

When Black folks first started to pray within the context of the Jesus-faith, I was not there. However, it is safe to presume that they formed their early prayers on the Biblical Tradition of Prayer. This is not as simple and straightforward as it may sound. We must never forget that the introduction of Christianity to the slaves had a singular purpose — to make us better slaves! Just the opposite result obtained. Slaves
became more restive, insurrections increased and runaways abounded. The planters quickly re-grouped. No religious services of any kind were permitted without "tight monitoring" by the planters and their overseers. The celebrated Cotton Mather prescribed that only "selective" passages of Scripture should be shared with slaves less the system of slavery be disrupted. Our ancestors received an overdose of "slaves, obey your masters" and "Thou shalt not steal." The great themes of Biblical revelation on liberation, justice and equality in Jesus Christ were methodically extirpated from the catechism provided for slave instruction in the Christian faith. Added to this controlled doctrine was the prohibition against any slave learning to read or write. In many states, the penalty was death! Somehow, in spite of these obstacles, our ancestors found out what the Bible really said. As they determined that Jesus was Liberator, they also perceived that God was accessible to them via prayer. Could it have been that what the planters left out, God filled in? In some mysterious way, still unknown, we fastened our praying on the models of Biblical tradition.

I do not know where or when, but some of our folks found out about the prayer of Moses: It was paean of praise to the God of deliverance:

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb and as the showers upon the grass... He is
our Rock, His work is perfect; for all his ways are judgement; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he . . . When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of Israel . . . For the Lord's portion is his people . . . He found him in a desert land in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him and kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings . . . He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of his fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the shale.''

They learned of his providence and care from David, the keeper of Jesse's flock:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemeies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'"
In the midst of their repentance for sin they cried out with a fallen king:

"Have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. Behold I was shapened in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Hide thy face from me and blot out all mine iniquities. Create within me a clean heart; and renew a right spirit within me." 

I do not know where or when, but somehow, they found out that Jesus taught his disciples to pray:

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be they name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." 

I do not know where or when, but they identified with the sorrow of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane:
"Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me; Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done!" 

I do not know where or when, but somehow they learned of his compassion and forgiveness:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Thus it was, first and foremost, that the Biblical tradition of Prayer became the source material from which our forebears shaped the oral tradition of Black Prayer. The accurate perception of the parallel experience of the house of Israel and these New World Africans and their thirst for freedom meshed to produce the cries for deliverance from the Pharaohs of the Southland.

I do not intend to open old wounds needlessly, but the horrors of slavery, its calculated brutality, the quantified human misery, its mindless violence, tested the mettle of a people beyond the limits of human endurance. Can't you hear your ancestors singing in the canebrake:

Been in the storm so long;
Been in the storm so long
Been in the storm so long
Need a little time to pray

The chief function of prayer in the Black religious experience has been to cope with the uncertainties of our continuing North American experience. It has
never been easy for us in this land. Relatively speaking, only time and place have changed. Slavery, segregation, second-class citizenship, economic dislocation, all are only the specifics of systemic racism which touches every waking moment of our existence and every fiber of our being, one way or the other. How we wish it would go away, but it persists. Thus with no relief in sight, we turn it over to God. The resiliency of spirit necessary to endure what we have had to endure is due largely to our tradition of prayer which is the Strength of the Black religious experience. If Preaching is indeed the Heart of Black Worship, then Praying has been its Strength.

Praying in the Black religious experience is largely thematic. By that I mean only to suggest that there are certain bases in talking with God that we always touch. Frequently the opening prayer of a formal service will touch all the bases; sometimes it can be the prayer at the communion table or at the close of weekly prayer service or the prayer to open or close the monthly meeting of an auxiliary of the church — whatever! The tradition of Black prayer is that whenever you talk to God in the collective sense of worship, even though he already knows, there are some items that we feel “duty bound” to bring to his attention on our behalf. For the sake of some cursory analysis, I want to list the most prominent of these themes found in the prayer discipline of the Black religious experience.

First and foremost of the recurring themes of Praying is Praise and Thanksgiving. I have coupled these two themes because in Black prayer life, they feed
each other. We know that God is a great God and worthy to be praised. In our prayers, we take our time establishing for the worshippers how we feel about Him:

"Our God and our Father, the Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we come this morning with no merit of our own to boast, but only to give unto thee the honor and glory that is thine alone. You don't need us; we need you. Before the foundations of the world were formed, you were God all by yourself and we just come to praise your holy and righteous name. . . ."

Then the Thanksgiving begins once the worthiness of God to be praised has been clearly established in the minds and hearts of the hearers:

"We thank you for this brand new day; a day that we have never seen before. You've been so good to us; better than we have been to ourselves. You didn't have to wake us up this morning but you did, and we thank you for it. We thank you for the sleep we had last night that refreshed our body and for the food you set on our table this morning. We thank you for the activity of our limbs and the rightness of our minds. We thank you for your Holy Spirit that has led us to be in this place this morning. We thank you for our families and loved ones, for our church, our homes and all the good things of life with which you blessed our lives. And Father, we thank you for the hard times that have driven us closer to your bleeding side. We
thank you for our enemies who have taught us to lean and depend on you. Oh, we thank you for everything; but above all else, we thank you for Jesus, your darling Son, Mary’s baby, who came down through forty and two generations that we might have a right to the tree of life . . . ”

Praise and Thanksgiving are central themes of the tradition of Black prayer in worship.

The next theme that is struck early on, is the sorrow for sin — Repentance.

“Now, Father we come to this holy place to confess our sins. The things you told us to do, we have left undone; and the things you told us not to do, our hands have been busy. We need to be more loving; we need to be more patient; we need to be more forgiving; we need to be more generous. Forgive us Lord and try us one more time.”

The praying of Black folks is always at some point, — Intercessory with a pronounced world view:

“Heavenly Father, we pray for mankind everywhere; Bless those who are in the hospital and lie upon their beds of affliction. Especially do we lift up the names of those who are members of this branch of Zion. Send your angel of mercy to their bedside and comfort them with the assurance that you are a doctor who has never lost a patient. Whatever their condition, teach them to know that ‘underneath them are the
everlasting arms and the eternal God art ever our refuge.’ We pray for your starving children in other lands and for the needy in this nation. Bless the leaders of this nation and world. Move through their council chambers and by the Holy Spirit, let justice run down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. Bless President Reagan; we know he’s not treating us right, but bless him anyhow! Melt his heart of stone and make this nation what you want it to be.’’

The element of Petition in Black prayer may cover a variety of areas but usually with great specificity:

‘‘Lord, we know you have all power in your hands. Brother Nathaniel Jones is powerful sick this morning and the doctors have said they done all they can do. But you’re God, and if it be your holy will, raise him once more to health and strength that the saints might believe and your name be glorified.’’

Prayer petitioners in the Black religious experience are acutely conscious of the presence of sin and temptation:

‘‘Help us to resist the devil. He’s everywhere; and without you Lord, we just don’t stand a chance. Run the devil out of the choir; don’t let him get a hold on the trustees; keep the devil off the deacon board; don’t let him dwell at my house! Keep him on the run, Lord, for your name’s sake.’’
And again:

"Lord, just like Paul, some of us have a thorn in the flesh. We want you to remove it, Lord. We try so hard to do your will but we don't always have the strength to overcome. Take it away Lord so that we will learn to love you more and serve you better. We claim the victory in Jesus name."

Critics of the Black religious experience say there is too much dependence on God. I rather think that they are misreading the ultimate submission of the worshipper to the will of God. This element of submission is present in much of the liturgy of Black prayer:

"O Lord, we would not leave this praying ground without recognizing that you have the whole world in your hands. Accept the desires of our hearts and we trust your wisdom to do that which we ask. We know you're going to answer our prayers, one way or the other, and we bow in submission to your holy righteous will. We know you're going to do what's best for the situation and we leave it in your hands. Not our will, but thy will be done O Lord."

No self-respecting Black prayer would think of closing a prayer in a service of worship without clear mention of last things. As preaching is eschatological, so is praying, perhaps more so.

"Now Lord, we know that we didn't come here to stay always. We know this earth is not
our home. We’re just pilgrims making our way through this waste howling wilderness. One day soon and very soon you’re going to send your angel to fetch us one by one. You promised us that if we’d be faithful, you’d have a crown waiting for us. I want my crown. I want to be in that number that John saw, coming from the north, south, east and west — that number that no man can number. We don’t mind dying Lord; if this earthly tabernacle shall dissolve, Paul said we got another building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. I want to be in that number! I want to go to that land where Job said the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary shall be at rest. Every day will be Sunday; no more good-byes, just howdy, howdy. I want to be in that number. I want to see the Blessed Lamb upon the throne. We’ll sing in the heavenly choir:

All hail the power of Jesus name
Let angels prostrate fall
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him, crown Him
Crown Him, Lord of all

Oh, I want to be in that number. I want to hear your welcome voice say “Well done.” Grant unto us a resting place in your kingdom and we’ll give you the honor, praise and glory throughout ceaseless ages. Amen. Amen.”

One other comment might be made here about the themes of Black prayer. The centrality of Jesus is evi-
dent in every instance. In whatever portion of the prayer one looks, the invocation is made interchangeably to God and Jesus. When Black folks say 'Lord' they mean Jesus. The fabric of Black prayer in worship is generously laced with direct reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All that has gone before is an attempt to underline the recurring themes found with frequency within the body of the prayer discipline of Black people at worship.

Only passing mention needs to be made of the mode or mechanics of prayer in the Black religious experience. To say the least, praying has a striking similarity to preaching. There is rare exception to any of the substantive characteristics I listed earlier and most of the superficial characteristics are applicable as well. The use of the refrain is widespread in Black praying. It is patently rhythmic and poetic as we shall see in just a little while. I'm sure you have heard many a sweet 'hum' in Black praying as you have heard in preaching. The pray-er moves center stage (or pulpit, if you will). A certain kind of drama is induced with appropriate music as background. The injunction is made for 'every head to be bowed and every eye shut.' No moving around in the sanctuary is tolerated and ushers guard the entrances zealously. Prayer time in Black worship, is talking-to-God time. Most prayers move toward a climactic finish as do sermons. Praying time in a Black worship service is an event all by itself.

No discussion of Praying in the Black religious ex-
perience can close without specific reference to the poetic and picturesque language it contains. The following excerpts from prayers that I have heard across the years may remind you to give just a little more attention to what's going on when one of the saints is talking to the Lord. Many are literary gems that we should save and savor. They are a rich part of the Black religious experience.

This phrase bespeaks the strong sentiment of freedom of religion and worship:

"... I thanks you Lord, that in my hour of trial, I have the right to pick and choose my own praying ground. . . ."

This gem makes specific reference to the pray-er's absolute trust in God:

"... When the world's on fire, I don't have to run for shelter, 'cause you is a Rock in a weary land. . . ."

The character of God in the view of the pray-er:

"You never make a mistake and you're too just to do wrong. . . ."

This is an obvious allusion to being alive and/or providence of God:

"... While we slumbered and slept, some of your children entered into judgement. Those who are gone, were better by accident than we have been on purpose. . . ."

I remember several years ago hearing an aged
minister praying for someone who was gravely ill in the congregation. The petition to restore the individual to health and strength was followed by this phrase:

"I knows you can, 'cause you totes a hospital around in the hem of your garment . . ."

Of course there are the timeless and precious prayers of an earlier generation that are still extant by means of that oral tradition so frequently lifted up in these discussions:

"Here we are again, Lord, knee-bowed and body-bent before your throne of grace . . . We come as empty pitchers before a full fountain. . . . We thank you for our early morning rising that found the blood still running lukewarm in our veins. We thank you that last night's sleep was not the sleep of death; our mattress was not our cooling board and our cover, our winding sheet. We woke up this morning and realized that you had lengthened out the brittle threads of our unprofitable life and allowed our golden moments to roll on a while longer. . . . While I'm down here praying, Lord search my heart. If you find anything that's not pleasing in your sight, take it out Lord and cast it into the sea of forgetfulness where it will not rise before me in this life nor condemn me in the judgment. Have mercy upon me, right now. . . . When I've done all that you've assigned my heart and hands, grant me a resting place somewhere in your kingdom where I'll praise your name throughout ceaseless ages. . . ."
Praying within the context of the Black worship experience, has been the strength of our people. Our tradition began when we could do little more than pray. But pray we did. We learned that God answers prayer. Oh Yes He does.

In the midst of preparing my study on Black Sacred Music, I conducted a mini-Gallup poll with the cooperation of several of my friends in ministry across the nation. I asked them to have twenty-five of their members to list their ten best loved hymns. In addition to providing the study with invaluable statistical data, I was astounded to observe that without exception, there were three hymns on every list of several hundred. My interest was to establish the most widely used hymns in Black worship. Those three hymns were *Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross*, *What A Friend We Have In Jesus* and *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah!* Since this paper is on prayer, I wish to close this chapter with that great prayer-hymn, *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah* which is expressive of the continuing pilgrimage that Afro-American Christians are making in this strange land.

*Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah,*
*Pilgrim thro' this barren land;*
*I am weak, but Thou art mighty;*
*Hold me with Thy powerful hand*
*Bread of heaven, Feed me till I want no more,*
*Bread of heaven, Feed me till I want no more.*

*Open now the crystal fountain,*
*Whence the healing waters flow*
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar,
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Strong Deliverer.
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me thro' the swelling current
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises I will ever give to Thee.
Songs of praises I will ever give to Thee.\textsuperscript{10}

Amen.
In the two previous chapters, I have lifted up two parts of this trilogy in Black worship. The centrality of preaching in the Black religious experience has persuaded me to assert that it is the Heart of Black Worship. Our peculiar social history made Praying necessary and it is undoubtedly the Strength of Black Worship. This final chapter's concern is with Singing, the Joy of Black Worship.

Allow me to digress a moment to be certain the nomenclature is precise. The Joy of Black Worship, not the pleasure nor the happiness of Black Worship
— but the Joy of Black Worship. Sometimes, inadvertently, these three words are confused in meaning. Pleasure is a very narrow and selfish emotion. It is rooted in our biology. It is primarily sensual; it has to do primarily with feeling and you have pleasure all by yourself. Now happiness is an emotion of a little more breadth. It is induced by ideas and goals, aspirations, achievements — that may be your own or of someone dear to you. Pleasure and emotion are stimulated only by the currency of some type of good news either to the emotion and/or the mind. On the other hand, joy has to do with the posture of the soul and the spirit. I believe that joy is of the Lord and it can be triggered by good or bad news. Whatever the news, if you are in the Lord, you know that "... all things work together for good for them that love the Lord." Thus, when a loved one dies, your grief is no less but you have joy in the Lord because you know you'll see them one day on the other side of the river. Even in disappointment, there is joy because faith tells us that the Lord will make a way out of no way! The religious music of Black Christians was shaped in the crucible of slavery but it bespeaks the existentialist faith that was the linch-pin of our survival. That music is grounded in the joy of our salvation — Jesus Christ! No matter what happened to us, how bitter our portion, Black folks who trusted in the Lord, never stopped singing the Lord's song in a strange land. Singing is indeed the Joy of Black Worship.

The study that I did a decade ago on the music of the Black religious experience hung on a rather sim-
ple yet profound idea. I argued in my dissertation that if you listen to what Black people are singing *religi­ously*, it is a clue as to what is happening to them *sociologically.* The launching pad for this chapter's discussion is several related ideas mentioned in the two chapters preceding. Let me review them for your refreshment and recollection.

I mentioned in the first chapter the calculated and premeditated distortion of slavery by Western historians. The history books and the social studies texts of this republic lead one to believe that the ancestors of Afro-Americans didn't mind slavery. There was always the stereotypic image of contented, grinning darkies, strumming banjoes. That is simply inaccurate. Black folks never did like being in slavery. There are detailed accounts of the fierce resistance of our African ancestors before the ships ever left the coasts of West Africa. Before the ships sailed, many leaped overboard and drowned rather than be enslaved. African women, heavy with child, plunged sharpened bamboo sticks into their bellies to kill the unborn rather than have it be born a slave. Many refused to eat or drink and sank into melancholia so deep they died on board. We never did like being slaves! At ports of entry for the slave traffic in the Caribbean and the North American continent, records are rife with accounts of slaves who immediately attempted to escape at the expense of being maimed or killed. Those who survived the machinery of slavery of the barbaric Atlantic slave trade were distributed about the Southland with careful concern to language differences in order to reduce the chance
of rebellion or insurrection. Snatched from their homeland, raped of their culture and language, they could not rob these New World Africans of the music in their souls. The penchant to sing was constant in spite of enslavement. That deepseated cultural tradition of song was kept in place via the oral tradition.

This is an appropriate moment for me to expand our discussion to include the oral tradition. The oral tradition can be defined as the transmission by word of mouth, song, drum and folk wisdom of the mores, customs, and religious rites of African peoples that persisted through the Atlantic slave trade and influenced the worship forms and patterns of Afro-Americans. A direct quote from an earlier work is instructive in this regard:

"To understand the depth and deep-rootedness of the oral tradition, one must appreciate several facts about African life and culture that not only antedate the Atlantic slave trade but are also apparent today. It has been mentioned earlier that African history has been preserved in its music. Troubadours, storytellers, and griots (official village historians) have been the history keepers.

Within the context of the holistic theological systems of Africa, all life is manifestly religious. The events of life — birth, death, puberty, fertility, harvest, famine, marriage, tragedy — have religious rites that give expression to that event. In the absence of any prescribed formula as to what is done and when, the music and the companion ceremony have been the key to the orche-
stration of events and the primary preservative ingredient of tradition."\textsuperscript{4}

The passage above underscores the importance and dominance of music in the life of the indigenous African, past and present.

The care taken to keep sizable numbers of Africans with a common tongue separate, contributed to the survival of the musical idiom and rhythm forms.\textsuperscript{5} With no common tongue, the musical expression was reduced to chants and moans on the rhythm forms and in the musical idioms that survived. As the slaves learned the language of the masters, their verbal commonality became most pronounced in the music that developed in the context of slavery.

The oral tradition kept alive the rhythm forms and musical idioms that were the vital links to the New World African's sense of being. The slave system forcibly stripped away the personhood of our ancestors but the oral tradition kept intact some measure of their humanness by means of what they could remember from the Mother Country.\textsuperscript{6}

A second myth that is rooted in the distorted view of Western history is grounded as much in ignorance as error. Many white Americans, past and present, while admitting to the immorality of slavery, excuse it by protesting that, "had it not been for slavery, these Africans would never have been Christianized and saved from heathenism." It is not my intent to be repetitious. This point was amplified in some detail
earlier in this work. It is important to underscore the naivete of Europeans about the dynamics of West African traditional religions. John Mbiti's work clearly established that West Africans were devotees of monotheism as early as 500 A.D. The assertions and conclusions drawn about traditional African religion being "animistic" and "polytheistic" are symptomatic of the naivete mentioned above. The religion of West Africans is highly transcendental — references to the "High God's" presence. Thus Africans would likely build an altar near some rise of earth close to a lagoon or body of water sensing that when the wind blew, it would make a special sound. The reader may recall Jesus telling Nicodemus late one night that the wind blows and no one knows from whence it comes or where it goes . . . likewise is the Spirit (of God). The theology of traditional West African religions have kinship with the New Testament thought of Jesus.

The wrinkle in the development of the Afro-American religious experience was that we were introduced to this Jesus person. When we arrived on these shores, we knew about the High God and there was fertile ground for Christianity to take root. The parallel learning of new language — the "pidgin English" of the slaves — and arranging musically the expression of our faith in Jesus created the scaffold from which faith emerged. The end-product was the "Jesus-faith" of the antebellum era in which the transcendentalism of African theology was complemented by the immanence of Christian theology. In retrospect, it is more accurate to conclude that the
Gospel. In a nutshell, that's the route of development of the music of the Black religious experience.

Now if we return to the other main route of musical development in Black life, so-called secular, we can observe again the sociology. After the Civil War, those freedmen who lost faith began to sing the Blues and as the tree suggests, blues-singing continues to the present. Blues, in turn, spun off Rag-time at the turn of the century; Rag-time spun off Jazz. Jazz went through several refinements: New Orleans Jazz, Dance Jazz, Modern Jazz, Cool Jazz. Jazz and Blues, in continuum, cross-fertilized each other producing a phenomenon of Rhythm and Blues at the height of the Fifties. If you listen carefully to Rhythm and Blues and Modern Gospel, you will observe that the "beat" is identical. That brings the reader quickly to the conclusion that the same beat that Black folks dance to on Saturday night is the same beat they shout to on Sunday morning.

Let us turn now more specifically to the evolution and development of Black religious music on the North American continent.

I. Afro-American Spiritual

It is a reasonably well established fact that the Afro-American Spiritual is the base-line music art-form that is the root of not only the music of Black-americans but of all music indigenous to America. There is no music born in America that does not
# COMPARISON OF MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN MUSIC AND SPIRITUALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFRICAN MUSIC</th>
<th>AFRO-AMERICAN SPIRITUALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythm</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polyrhythm</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polyphony</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recurring Lines</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spontaneous Creations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syncopation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pentatonic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antiphony</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross Rhythms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmony</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Refrains</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beat</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pentatonic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call &amp; Response</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reflect the imprimatur and influence of the Afro-American Spiritual. When you scrutinize the history of Rock and Roll and its chief practitioners, the Beatles, they confess unabashedly that they studiously copied the musicality of Little Richard, Otis Redding, B.B. King and other Black stars of the Rhythm and Blues family. All of the latter trace their musicality directly to the Black Church arena. Thus, if, indeed then, the Spiritual is the base-line music art-form, a summary profile of that music-form is appropriate here.

The Spiritual came into being largely out of the practical need for a means of communication within the slave community, in and out of the presence of the planters and overseers. The Spirituals became, literally, the Black telegraph around the plantations and across the Southland. The New World African's thirst and quest for freedom was universal as obviously revealed by the literature of the Spirituals as thinly disguised "Freedom Songs." The Spirituals have been mistakenly labeled "slave songs." The Spirituals ARE songs coined during the slave period but clearly exhibit the thirst of their creators who wanted freedom from slavery and oppression at any cost! Du Bois described the character of the Spirituals in matchless prose:

"And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human ex-
pression born this side of the seas! It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.”

Now there are some benchmarks by which you can identify an authentic Afro-American spiritual and these characteristics will be somewhat familiar to the reader if you reflect on the characteristics of Black preaching. (See Chap. I)

A. Deep Biblicism: If the music under consideration does not have explicit or implicit reference to the Bible, no matter what else obtains, it is not an authentic Afro-American spiritual. For example, "Joshua Fit De Battle Ob Jerico an' De Walls Come Tumblin' Down"; "De Blin' Man Stood in De Road and Cried"; "Dere's a Han' Ritin on De Wall" (Daniel's prophecy in the face of Belshazzar's desecration of the holy vessels of the Temple); whatever spiritual you can think of, there is always an explicit or implicit reference to the Scriptures. The Bible was the source material for the antebellum slaves to create the musical literature of their faith. Our slave ancestors exhibited remarkable spiritual perception by capturing the essence of the Bible as it fell in fragments from the master's table.

B. Repetition: This characteristic was necessary to help us during our pre-literate era as a memory
device. It was a natural carry-over from our West African culture. In the spiritual-form itself there is often a double repetitive character. The technical name for this musical quality is incremental iteration which simply defined means that there is not only repetition in the melodic line but also in the lyric line as well. viz

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh-oh, sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?¹⁰

This particular characteristic of the spiritual form with the double repetition facilitated the ease of transmission of an unfamiliar folk song in the slave community.

C. Rhythm: It will help greatly to understand the emotional flavor of worship in traditional Afro-American churches if one faces the fact that the primary characteristic of European music is the melodic line:¹¹ (do re mi fa sol la ti do). However, the primary characteristic of African music is the "beat!" African music, by its nature, is intended to induce body movement. Thus the dominance of beat or rhythm. It seems to me that when Afro-Americans are at worship, they should properly be singing music that is relevant to their sociology and culture. The conclusion can be drawn that if you are a member of a predominantly Black congregation, the most appropriate music is that which induces movement. Now
many of us who are African ancestry have shrunk from this emotion-inducing music because of a myth that persists in the West. There is the pervasive belief that to be emotional is to be unintellectual. That is grave error that has its origin in the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. Its exported form to colonial America produced the Age of Intellectualism. The presence of that phenomenon transformed the enthusiastic and lively frontier religion of white America from participatory worship to spectator worship. The concomitant draining of spirit-filled worship was predictable. We should know better now than to swallow this shibboleth of the West. Two recent examples are sufficient to discredit this myth: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Lord Bertrand Russell! In our lifetime, never have we seen passion and intellect so marvelously wedded. Do not shrink from the emotional content of honest, religious fervor.

When you are in the presence of a body of baptized believers of the Afro-American persuasion and someone lifts up in song an authentic Spiritual with its profound theology, and its natural rhythm starts your foot to patting and the message starts to pluck on your heartstrings, you cannot help but feel something very special. For instance, this old standard of our early faith:

*There's a bright side, somewhere!*
*There's a bright side, somewhere!*
*Don't you rest until you find it;*
*There's a bright side somewhere!*¹²

I believe that with all my heart.
D. **Call and Response**: The structural form of the Spiritual is directly parallel to the structural form of African music. No where is it more clearly observed than in the Call and Response character of the spirituals.\(^{13}\) The oral tradition required the leader to establish the "Call" (lead line) or incremental line and the chorus would answer with the "Response" or choral iteration. There are many African parallels to Spirituals in structural form that correspond even to syllabic count. The Spiritual following is typical of the use of Call and Response:

**LEADER**: I heard de preachin' of de Elder  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word, preachin', de word,  
**LEADER**: I heard de preachin' of de Elder,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word of God  
**LEADER**: How long did it rain can anyone tell?  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word, preachin', de word,  
**LEADER**: For three long days and nights it fell,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word of God  
**LEADER**: How long was Jonah in de belly of de whale?  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word, preachin', de word,  
**LEADER**: Twas three whole days and nights he sailed,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word of God  
**LEADER**: When I was a mourner, I mourned 'til I got through,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word, preachin', de word,  
**LEADER**: My knees got acquainted wid de hillside too,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word of God,  
**LEADER**: I hear de preachin' of de Elder,  
**CHORUS**: Preachin', de word, preachin', de word,
LEADER: I heard de preachin' of de Elder,
CHORUS: Preachin' de word of God.
ALL: Yes, Preachin' de word of God.¹⁴

One additional example should be sufficient to illustrate this common form among Spirituals:

LEADER: Dey crucified my Lord,
CHORUS: An' he never said a mumblin' word.
LEADER: Dey crucified my Lord,
CHORUS: An' he never said a mumblin' word.
ALL: Not a word—not a word—not a word.
LEADER: Dey nailed Him to de tree, etc.¹⁵

E. Double or Coded Meaning: There is one other characteristic of the Spiritual which is of crucial importance to the full understanding of this music-form. African culture embraces what is known as the Mask and Symbol.¹⁶ The social organization of West Africa was sufficiently civilized to avoid confrontation at the interpersonal level. If two neighbors have a quarrel, it would be a violation of village ethics to inflict a direct insult. However, it was considered proper and acceptable to frame a song or fable to thinly disguise the wrong inflicted. Quite simply, it was saying one thing to mean another. The transfer from West Africa to the north American continent produced the double meaning quality found with some considerable frequency in Spirituals. It developed as much because of the sociology of the slave as well as his culture. The harshness of the slave system made it necessary for slaves to devise a means to communicate among themselves in the presence of the masters and the overseers. The Spiritual-form became that thinly disguised vehicle.

60
The classic, "'Go Down Moses'" is a prime example of the coded meaning of Spirituals. Indeed, these new World Africans were singing of an historical occurrence in the life of the house of Israel but more especially this was their earnest prayer that God would send them a Moses to deliver them from the Egypt of slavery!

The antebellum slaves frequently sang, "'Steal Away, Steal Away to Jesus'" as a prayer hymn but it also served as a signal to alert would-be runaways that a section of the Underground Railway was passing through and hopeful passengers must "'steal away.'" At plantation baptisms, slave congregations sang "'Wade in de water,'" but it was also sung to warn runaway slaves in flight from slave patrols to get into some water to throw the bloodhounds off their trail. The slave quarters resounded with the chorus, "'E'vrybody talkin' bout heab'n ain't goin dere..."' as its members looked knowingly in the direction of the "'Big House.'" The use of the Spiritual in this manner reveals that the music of the antebellum slave was not only religious but it was also political!

The religious music of our antebellum ancestors that remains extant, is a critical resource and reservoir of internal evidence. It is not observation from the outside looking in, no matter how well intentioned — but rather the slaves' own view of this condition in oppression and how they responded to it and how they survived. 17 It was the religion of the spirituals that provided the new World African with the resiliency of spirit and the endurance necessary to survive.
the most brutal form of human bondage in the history of mankind. For me, that is the rationale for every self-respecting Black Church to use the literature of the Afro-American Spiritual with considerable frequency. There's a colloquialism in our tradition that admonishes with some wisdom, "Don't forget the bridge that brought you over!"

II Black Meter Music

The second identifiable form of sacred music that has the pronounced imprint of the Afro-American experience is Black Meter Music. For a moment, let me return to my central thesis that I set forth earlier in this chapter: If you listen to what Black people are singing religiously, it is a clue as to what is happening to them sociologically. Meter music was a phenomenon of the European community. It was exported to colonial America where it found broad reception due to its livelier character and its fresh imagery of religious sentiments. It is not an exaggeration to say that the quatrain form of this music took America of the Great Awakening by storm. Meter music came into its heyday during the great camp meetings led by Jonathan Edwards. It remained popular through the Second Awakening. It was first introduced to America around 1800 but the Black use and imprint on meter music sequentially followed the establishment of a music tradition of their own making, the Afro-American religious folk song or Spiritual.

The meter style appealed to the antebellum slaves (soon to be freedmen) at two levels. The first, was practical; the quatrain form with the second and fourth
lines always rhymning, served as a memory device in their pre-literate era. The strict prohibition against teaching a slave to read and write was enforced with unspeakable cruelties. The second was in a sense, theological; the meter music of the Dr. Watts-style hymns possessed a deep Biblicism and vivid imagery. In addition, the expanding religious consciousness of Blacks in frontier America made them feel comfortable in appropriating what they learned from the masters and stylizing it for their own specific religious and worship needs. The development of the music came during a period of transition of slaves to freedmen status. It seems apparent that with the end of the Civil War, Black Meter Music came into great ascendancy even though they had been privy to its use for more than a generation. Some experts theorize that after Emancipation, freedmen took seriously their equality to former masters and copied their worship styles as an expression of "freedom". The earlier infrequent use of meter was due largely to their resentment of the slave-master status and anything associated with it including meter music.

It must be mentioned that this writer arbitrarily named the music-form under discussion, Black Meter Music in order to distinguish it from the original form imported from Europe. Wendel Whalum specifically assigns the design and modal form of this Black Meter Music to Black Baptists. As the structured congregations of the Black community multiplied after the Civil War, so did the frequency of the use of these hymn texts. Whalum's comment concerning this period is incisive:
"The Black Methodists and Methodists endorsed Watts' hymns but the Baptists "blackened" them. They virtually threw out the meter signature and rhythm before 1875 had begun a new system which, though based on the style of singing coming from England to America in the eighteenth century, was drastically different from it. It was congregational singing much like the spirit had been in which the text was retained."18

Whalum has intimated above that there is a direct relationship to the Spiritual. The presence of a distinct beat and obvious free syncopation make apparent the direct relationship. Add to that the performance which always has the responsorial mode — the Call and Response device — where a leader recites the line in singsong fashion, followed by the congregation in unison singing of the text. A crude representation of the form follows:

LEADER: I was a wandering sheep  
I did not love the fold

CONGREGATION:  
I---w-as a wan-der-ing sheep---,  
I---di-d not lo-ve- the fo-ld--

LEADER: I would not hear my Shepherd's voice,  
I would not be control

CONGREGATION:  
I--- wou--ld not hear--- my Shepherd's vo-ice  
I--- wou--ld n--ot be-- con-- trol--led19
The practice of meter singing was earmarked by at least two ancillary supports, keeping time and signal for the last stanza. In the antebellum community in the South, there were strict prohibitions against the use of musical instruments especially the drum. The planters were aware that Africans used the drum as a means of communication and their fear of insurrection was so great that drumming was disallowed. Thereby, the new World African substituted the hand-clap and the foot-pat in order to keep time for their music. In the development of meter music, the heel and toe foot-pat became the hallmark for keeping the proper tempo. The signal for the last stanza of a hymn to be sung was universally standing by the congregation. Whether it was the second or fourth or fifth stanza, if the leader motioned for the congregation to stand, that was the signal that the singing of that particular hymn was at its end.

Black Meter Music has developed regional differences that are ever so slight and yet not so slight as to escape recognition. The form of meter music most familiar to this writer is the genre common to the eastern seaboard of the U.S. but most pronounced in Virginia and the Carolinas. Georgia and Florida METER is similar. The meter singing of southern Alabama has its own distinct character as has Mississippi and Texas. The nuances of meter singing in Louisiana are distinguishable between north and south Louisiana. These forms, in turn, produced cross-fertilized forms in other states like Tennessee and Kentucky.

As the congregation took its seat, one stanza of the
hymn would be "moaned", that is the melody without words — to finish off the rendition of the meter song.

The meter singing described above was (is) sung in Short Meter, Common Meter and Long Meter depending upon the poetic form of the hymn in terms of feet or syllables. In the Afro-American tradition, Common Meter is far the most frequently used. One such familiar common meter follows:

I love the Lord: he heard my cries,
    And pitied every groan;
Long as I live, when troubles rise,
    I'll hasten to his throne.

I love the Lord: he bowed his ear,
    And chased my grief away:
Oh, let my heart no more despair
    While I have breath to pray.

The Lord beheld me sore distressed;
    He bade my pains remove;
Return my soul, to God, they rest,
    For thou hast known his love.20

The ancestors of this present generation of Afro-American Christians were very creative in their musical sense. Not only did we appropriate the Watts-style hymns and sing them in Short, Long and Common Meter, they frequently borrowed Euro-American authored hymns which had specific hymn tunes (not generally true of original meter music) and transposed
them into meter-style hymns. The figure following is perhaps the most familiar hymn treated in this fashion. The precise musical notation is included so that a comparison can be made with melodic line of the hymn tune and the form in which it is sung, meter-style.

LEADER: Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land

CONGREGATION: Gui--de me-- O--- Thou- Great- Je-ho--vah Pil--grim thr-ou-gh thi--s bar--en land---.

LEADER: I am weak but Thou art mighty Hold me with Thy powerful hand

CONGREGATION: I--- a-m- we-ak but Th-ou a-rt migh--ty Ho--ld me-- wi--th Th-y po-wer-ful ha--nd

LEADER: Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, Feed me til I want no more

CONGREGATION: Bre--ad o-f hea-ven, bre--ad of hea-ven Fe--ed me-- 'til I-- wa--nt no-o mo-re--.

There is another identifiable Black music-form in the Black religious experience. Three-quarters of the way through my doctoral studies, it dawned on me that I had overlooked a body of sacred music that I remembered from my childhood. For the sake of cate-
gory, I have called them Prayer and Praise Songs, since their primary use developed in the prayer meetings and praise services; that is, the unstructured and informal services common to the Black religious scene a generation ago. In some rural areas, they are still of great currency and occasionally you can hear them at pre-revival services in an urban center. For the most part, these Prayer and Praise Songs are not in hymn books or Gospel Pearl collections. They reside primarily in the memory banks of worshippers on my side of fifty. It is important to note that though they are related to Spirituals, they are not spiritual in form or origin. All genuine Spirituals antedate the Civil War. Nor are they meter music though some of the lyrics can be traced directly to the familiar quatrains of Isaac Watts and John and Charles Wesley. Their origins date to the period of the ascendancy of Black Meter Music and predate the introduction of hymn-book worship in the Black religious experience. If I were to fix a period, my best guess would be 1875 to 1915. The latter date marks the point at World War I when hymn book worship had really taken hold in Afro-American worship. At best this music is a transitional form that bridged the shift from meter singing without accompaniment to hymn-book worship with accompaniment. Nevertheless, they are a valuable resource and reservoir of the Afro-American musical heritage. It will be crucial that some effort is made soon to collect and codify this body of musical literature.

The primary characteristics of the Prayer and Praise Songs is the dominance of a lively tempo and a lead line followed by unison singing. Two examples follow:
You don’t know what the Lord tol’ me
You don’t know what the Lord tol’ me
O you don’t know, you wasn’t there
You don’t know when and you don’t know where
You don’t know what the Lord tol’ me\textsuperscript{21}

Subsequent stanzas involve only slight word changes in the lead lines:

\begin{quote}
I was prayin’ when the Lord tol’ me, etc.
I was singing when the Lord tol’ me, etc.
I was shouting when the Lord tol’ me, etc.
\end{quote}

Of course the poetic form a a b c a provided ample opportunity for improvisation.

The second example is a variation on the same theme:

\begin{quote}
Jesus on the mainline
Tell Him what you want!
Jesus on the mainline
Tell Him what you want
Jesus on the mainline
Tell’ Him what you want
Jesus on the mainline now.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

This sample follows a common Prayer and Praise Song poetic form viz. a b a b a b c.

The additional stanzas require only a change in the lead line:

\begin{quote}
If you want the Holy Ghost
Tell Him what you want, etc.
\end{quote}
Somehow we must find the time and discipline in this generation to permanently preserve this quarter of our musical heritage.

III Hymns of Improvisation

With the end of the Civil War, a marked change took place in the sociology of the former slaves. In swift succession, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution were passed; slavery was abolished, the ex-slaves were declared citizens and were granted the right to vote. The newly freed men and women earnestly began to participate in the business of running the republic at the state, county and municipal level. At emancipation, 4.8 million slaves became freed men overnight. In every state except Virginia and Texas, freemen participated in government and politics. This was the glorious period of Reconstruction. Suddenly, without warning, the years of Black progress were thrown into reverse or neutral. This sudden alteration in the sociology of the freedmen had its roots in the Presidential contest between Tilden and Hayes that threw the outcome of the election into the House of Representatives. Rutherford B. Hayes became President at too high a cost for the hopes and aspirations of Black folks. He agreed, as a condition for his selection, to pull the Federal troops out of the South. This was clear evidence that the political, social and economic rights of the freedmen were of no paramount importance to the nation. Reconstruction was followed swiftly by Post-reconstruction. This period for Blacks was as dim as
the previous period had been bright. All of the segregation statues that this nation erased just a few years ago were spawned in this period. It was the heyday of the White Knights of Camelia and the Ku Klux Klan. All of the political, social and economic gains made since the end of the Civil War, went up in the rekindled flames of racism. The anti-Black sentiment became so strong in the nation that in less than a generation, segregation became the established mores of the land, sanctioned by the highest court in the land, with Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896). Thus the period that began with the end of physical slavery, ended with a psychological slavery in its place.

There was one bright light in this dark experience. At the end of the Civil War, only one Black person in twenty could read or write due to that prohibition against teaching slaves to read. By the turn of the century, 1900, ten out of twenty could read. The freedmen's school, the land grant colleges, the denominational schools, in less than a generation, had put universal illiteracy to flight. In turn, the newly acquired facility to read and write had a profound impact on the worship style in Black life. The phenomenon of hymn-book use was introduced to Black worship services. Here were these freed men and women, one generation removed from chattel slavery, trying to sing within the print-oriented strictures of the Protestant hymn-form, eight bars to the stanza and eight bars to the refrain. The net effect was that all of the enthusiasm and fervor was drained out of the worship experience. Providentially, at the same time of the advent of hymn-book worship in Black services, the Latter Rain
movement began on Azuza Street in Los Angeles, California. The Pentecostal experience began to sweep the Black religious community. Black Methodists and Baptists left their churches in droves, attracted by the lively music induced by the use of the drum and the tambourine. The flavor of worship of the so-called “holiness” churches provided a climate in which the authentic idiom of Black sacred music was preserved until Black Methodists and Baptists came to their senses at the beginning of World War I and reclaimed their rejected heritage. If it had not been for the Holiness Church — the Pentecostal movement among Blacks — we might have lost our unique musical tradition had it not been for flowering Pentecostalism which kept it alive. We owe the Holiness Church a great debt.

The introduction of hymn-book worship in Black religious life brought with it pianos, organs and organized choirs. In many ways, we began to mimic white worship forms (orders of worship, etc.) as symptoms of our expanding religious consciousness. It was not very long before we made a major adjustment to the presence of the hymn-book and its effect on our services. Our acceptance of the message and lyrics of Euro-American hymns was broad but we yearned for that traditional fervor that the hymn-book seemed to dilute so markedly. The practice of hymn improvisation began, almost imperceptibly, at first, and then it was soon universalized in Black religious services. By the first rumblings of World War I, the pattern was set. Afro-American Christians learned that they could take these Euro-American authored hymns and with some
minor adjustments musically, make them their own. On the page following is a musical notation that approximates what takes place when a Euro-American hymn undergoes "improvisation". Fundamentally, the signature is stretched or slowed in tempo; then syncopation is introduced with the use of ragged measure (uneven measure). The end result is a pronounced gospel effect. It may well be that this form of improvised hymns was the precursor of what we know as the gospel idiom. In any event, the performance of any of these hymns according to the musical signature is vastly different from the performance in improvised fashion, frequently heard in Black worship services. The companion figures on the page following is a fair representation of what is happening musically.

The mini-Gallup poll referred to earlier, produced the list below which I have named the "Top Twenty" of Improvised Hymns:

Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross
What A Friend We Have In Jesus
Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah
My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less
There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood
Pass Me Not O Gentle Saviour
Father I stretch My Hands To Thee
At The Cross
There Is A Name I Love To Hear
Beams of Heaven
Higher Ground
Sweet Hour Of Prayer
I Must Tell Jesus
1. Jesus, keep me near the cross—There a precious fountain,
2. Near the cross, a trembling soul, Love and mercy found me;
3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, Bring its scenes before me;
4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait, Hoping, trusting ever,
I Am Thine O Lord
On Jordan's Stormy Bank I Stand
I'll Overcome

It should be noted in passing, that the genre of Euro-American hymns that received the "improvisation" of the Afro-American religious experience, universally reflected the Black community's reaction and response to their social circumstances. Blacks at worship appropriated and stylized those hymns "which suited their case". Close scrutiny of the messages contained in the hymns listed above, reveals the indomitability of faith and hope of Black-Americans in spite of rejection and disappointment in this land. The very use of these hymns in selective fashion demonstrate the impact of urbanization and literacy. It led naturally to some imitation of what Blacks observed in mainstream Christianity, but culturally (musically) adjusted for use in the authentic folk worship of Afro-American churches.

IV Gospel: Historic and Modern

I have reminded you with some repetition that 'if you listen to what Black people are singing religiously, it is a clue to what is happening to them sociologically.' World War I came to America and to its chief underclass, Black folks. This nation gathered up its young men in the struggle to make the world "safe for democracy." Blacks set aside their differences with this nation and joined the military forces in significant numbers. We bled and died in Europe and the survivors returned to America with great ex-
pectations of receiving justice and equality in light of distinguished service and unqualified support of the nation in the time of war. What a bitter disappointment! The summer following the cessation of hostilities in Europe erupted in the worst racial conflict in the nation’s history. The loss of life among Blacks was so great that James Weldon Johnson dubb ed it “The Red Summer.” Before Black America recovered from the trauma of this unbridled outbreak of racial violence, the early warnings of the Great Depression settled upon the very same victims. It is true that the crash of the stock market and bank failures did not occur until 1929, but economic depressions always come early to the poor and always leaves last. Thus, Black Americans were plunged into economic chaos as early as 1923.

At about that moment in our pilgrimage, there was a son of a preacher from Villa Rica, Georgia, making the rounds of the honky tonk circuit in the South. He was known as ‘Georgia Tom’ and he played piano and arranged for the likes of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. He moved to Chicago where he was felled with a life-threatening illness. He made a promise to the Lord, if his health was restored, he would consecrate his gifts to the work of the church. The man’s real name is Thomas A. Dorsey, the Godfather of Gospel music; he still lives today, a grand old gentleman of more than four score years.

Thomas Dorsey’s contribution to Black religious music is inestimable. Dorsey openly confesses the influence of C.A. Tindley, Afro-America’s prolific gospel hymn writer and pastor of Philadelphia’s famous Tind-
ley Temple. Unlike Tindley, Dorsey did not compose within the constraints of the Protestant hymn-form, eight bars to the stanza and eight bars to the refrain. Though the bright imagery of Tindley influenced him, Dorsey's style was set early on, marked by colloquial lyrics and broad use of the call and response elements of the Spirituals with which he was intimately familiar. The sophisticated treatment of the call and response and the lilting syncopation and rhythm wedded to the contemporary themes of Dorsey's compositions provided the Afro-American religious arena with a distinct new music art-form — Gospel. So universal was the influence that much of the music of this era was referred to as "Dorseys."

During those early days of his gospel career, Professor Dorsey visited a desperately sick friend on Chicago's sprawling South Side. When he returned to his small apartment, he sat down and penned these words which have become standard in gospel folklore:

I was standing by the bedside of a neighbor,  
Who was just about to cross the swelling tide,  
And I asked him would he do me a favor:  
Kindly take this message to the other side.

If you see my Saviour, tell Him that you saw me,  
When you saw me, I was on my way.  
You may meet some old friend who may ask for me,  
Tell them I'm coming home someday. 

---

29
Tony Heilbut, a professor of English at Hunter College in New York City and an avid gospel aficionado, wrote a book several years ago subtitled, *Good News In Bad Times*. It is a volume well worth your reading about the personalities and events of this era. That title is an apt description. It was during the period of 1923 through 1930 that Thomas Dorsey created the greatest volume of his work. Clearly his compositions mirrored the hard times of the Depression era and the resilient faith of its devotees. That is an apt description of the sense of gospel music.

It was a bad time for Black folks in America. Grown men stood on the corners of Chicago's busy streets trying to sell their services for a dollar a day. In Norfolk, Virginia, 85% of the adult population filled the relief rolls. All across this nation, while matrons dismissed their Black maids who had no choice but to go home to empty pantries and wring their hands over dish water. Lester Granger of the Urban League was quoted as saying that "Negro America was coming apart at the seams." In this frightful time, Thomas A. Dorsey picked up the fragile hopes of Black people and put them together in this classic hymn of trust and hope:

Like a ship that's tossed and driven
Battered by the angry sea,
When the storms of life are raging,
And their fury falls on me.
I wonder what I have done,
That makes this race so hard to run.
Then I say to my soul, "Take courage!"
The Lord will make a way somehow.
Chorus:
*The Lord will make a way some how*
*When beneath the cross I bow*
*He will take away each sorrow*
*Let Him have your burden now.*
*When the load bears down so heavy,*
*The weight is shown upon my brow;*
*There's a sweet relief in knowing,*
*The Lord will make a way some how.*

This gospel number echoes the existentialist faith of an earlier day. H. Beecher Hicks Jr. of Washington's Metropolitan Baptist Church says: "The Lord will make a way anyhow!"

Dorsey is the undisputed pioneer of the Gospel era. He peddled his compositions from church to church and convention to convention. For the most part, the mainline churches were very slow in accepting this new music, but the people heard it gladly, so much so, that the demand melted what was sometimes fierce resistance.

It is a sad commentary that many prominent church leaders in Black life were quoted as saying, "We don't want that jump-up music in our church." It needs to be understood that that smacks at self-rejection. Gospel music traces its origins directly through our pain pilgrimage in this land. For a brief time, we had an "invisible church" in the twentieth century as we had in the nineteenth century in slavery. These gospel groups were packing municipal auditoriums with their Saturday and Sunday night "gospel wars" when many
Black churches wanted for attendance. If you visit frontline churches today, all of them welcome gospel with all its trappings; electronic keyboards, drums, electric bass and now and then a saxophone. There is an Ashanti proverb that says: ‘If there is no music, the spirit will not come.’ I know that’s right!

Of course Dorsey was not alone. He introduced Mahalia Jackson to Chicago audiences and their successes opened the doors for other practitioners in the gospel arena. Sallie and Roberta Martin became hallmark performers. Other artists of this early period read like a Who’s Who of early gospel: Kenneth Morris, W.H. Brewster, Theodore Frye, Lillian Bowles and little Clara Ward and of course, Mahalia.

World War II was a re-run of World War I. The Black GI’s of this land fought in the European and Pacific conflict and returned to the U.S. expecting an end to the Jim Crow that was so pervasive in American life. Conditions were no better than when they left. Once again the paraoxysms of racial conflict beset the land. There was one bright light of hope: the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously outlawed segregation in public education (Brown vs. the Board of Education). That bright light of hope dimmed quickly. The ‘all deliberate speed’ of the court’s mandate was not even a turtle’s pace in desegregating America’s school districts. Into this void, stepped Martin Luther King Jr. This prince of the church fired our imagination with his novel technique of nonviolent resistance. The level of our hopes and aspirations were elevated with his splendid oratory and the charisma of his leadership.
Within a few years, King had mobilized a nonviolent army marching across the South, knocking at the locked doors of justice and equality. demanding with dignity and respect our full citizenship as American-born citizens.

Parallel to this King-led social revolution, our music reflected the change in the social mores. In American life generally and Black life particularly, there has been much to do about the sacred and secular. At the height of the Birmingham struggle, just on the tail-end of the Quartet Phenomenon, there came thundering out of the West, Edwin Hawkins and his spectacular treatment of an old camp-meeting hymn, "O Happy Day." Hawkins, a product of Black Pentecostalism, took the refrain of that familiar hymn and added to the basic gospel treatment, a *bossa nova* beat and a couple of jazz progressions, and all across the nation, the public was snapping its fingers to "O Happy Day." There was little discernment as it rode the top of the pop charts that this was a church song. Protestant, Catholic and Jew were singing, "O Happy Day." The point is, that at this juncture in Black experience the differences that separated so-called secular and sacred music, began to recede. This was paralleled by the students of the Movement developing what we came to know as Freedom Songs. When you inspect the Freedom Songs, one discovers that they are merely the Field Spirituals of a hundred years earlier:

I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus
I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on
Freedom

Don't you let nobody turn you roun'
Don't you let segregation turn you roun'

I want Jesus to walk with me . . .
All along my pilgrim journey

I want Jesus to walk with me . . .
All along my freedom journey

With the slight transposition of a few words and in the twentieth century, we had the phenomenon of Freedom Songs.

In a short time, Aretha Franklin became a superstar; a gospel singer who introduced the musicality of the Afro-American religious experience into the world of popular music. The American public was mesmerized and before we knew it, the era of Soul Music was upon us. It was simply the transfer of the gospel idiom into the so-called secular arena. If we had stepped back and looked at this growing phenomenon, there was an element of predictability when one considers the personnel of the entertainment world. With rare exception, all of the big names of the industry, first honed their skills in church choirs and before church audiences. The list is too long to cite here but a sampling is instructive: Otis Redding, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, Sara Vaughn, Nancy Wilson, Sam Cooke, Gladys Knight and of course, Aretha.

Gospel’s lineage is directly out of the Black religious experience. All of the musical characteristics can be
traced directly to current West African music-forms. The lyrics, in style and substance, center in the Jesus-faith of the Black religious community. The broad acceptance of gospel as an authentic artform dates to the Aretha Franklin/Edwin Hawkins phenomenon mentioned earlier. Those two events ushered in the era of Modern Gospel of which Andrae Crouch has been the chief exponent. Of course, there were others who help pave the way such as Robert Fryerson, and Clinton Utterbach. The term, Modern Gospel, is used only to indicate that Gospel as a music-art-form has come of age and not to suggest that historic gospel is out of date. Nothing could be further from the truth. The old favorites of gospel are as popular as ever although here and there you'll find some of the old standards with a brand new arrangement mirroring the influence of the modern era.

No discussion of Gospel is complete without the mention of James Cleveland. If Thomas Dorsey is the godfather of Gospel, The Rev. James Cleveland is the favorite godchild. Cleveland has no peer in the world of Gospel. The most crucial ingredient of Cleveland's permanence and broad acceptance is his God-given talent and genius. His devotees believe that "James could sing the telephone book." Cleveland has resisted the temptation to tamper with the integrity of the art-form he so ably epitomizes. He has never compromised on his insistence that Gospel is a genuine, permanent music art-form. James Cleveland is at the top of the Gospel arena and no one is a close second.

Modern Gospel, properly defined, maintains the identity of the root music-form while borrowing from
other musical disciplines and adding to it. As an illustration of that, there appears following the lyrics of a modern gospel number that has much currency in contemporary Black religious life. It has the verbage of the Watts-style hymn and is set to an old Irish folk melody, Londonderry Air (Danny Boy).

Amazing Grace shall always be my song of praise;
For it was grace that bought my liberty.
I'll never know just how Christ came to love me so.
He looked beyond my faults and saw my need.
I shall forever lift mine eyes to Calvary;
To view the Cross where Jesus died for me!
How marvelous, the grace that caught my falling soul;
He looked beyond my faults and saw my need.34

That great movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. has given us what might be another national hymn. It developed precisely along the path of those improvised hymns described earlier in this chapter. Its roots are in that old prayer meeting hymn of C.A. Tindley:

This world is one great battlefield,
With forces all arrayed;
But with the Lord, A sword of mine,
I'll over come some day.

Refrain:

I'll overcome, I'll overcome;
I’ll overcome some day (some day).
If in my heart, I do not yield,
I’ll overcome some day.

The students of the early Movement,35 stretched out the signature and introduced the ragged measure. Not only did the ‘‘I’’ undergo change to ‘‘we’’ but these young people misheard that last line which became, ‘‘deep in my heart, I do believe . . . .’’ In a very short time, this form of a gospel hymn has become an international hymn of resistance to injustice and oppression. The voices of Irish Catholics in Londonderry have sung it as well as indigenous Africans in Soweto, South Africa. It is a part of the legacy of a musical tradition that has always been relevant to the social circumstance of those who created it.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day (some day).
Deep in my heart, I do believe,
We shall overcome some day.

\[
\frac{\sqrt{14}}{2^2} = \frac{\sqrt{16}}{2^3} = \frac{\sqrt{16}}{4}
\]
FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION
2. Walker, Wyatt Tee, Somebody's Calling My Name [Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979], p. 22.
3. Ibid, p. 29.

CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER TWO
5. Psalm 51, King James Version.
7. Ibid, 26:39, 42.
9. Traditional.

CHAPTER THREE
1. Walker, Wyatt Tee, Somebody's Calling My Name, [Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979], p. 17.
3. Walker, op. cit., p. 27.
5. Ibid, p. 29.
Index

A
Afro-American Spiritual 53ff
Atlantic slave trade 3
Augustine 8

B
Birmingham 81
Black Meter Music 62ff
Blues 53
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 20
Bowles, Lillian 80
Brewster, W.H. 80
Brown vs. Board of Education 80

C
Call and Response 14, 81
Carter, Harold 27
Charles, Ray 82
Civil War 1, 7, 51, 53, 63, 68, 70, 71
Cleveland, James 83
Cooke, Sam 82
Crouch, Andrae 83

D
Dorsey, Thomas A. 76, 77, 83
DuBois, W.E.B. 55

E
Emancipation 51
Euro-American hymns 51, 72, 73, 78

F
Franklin, Aretha 82, 83
Freedom songs 53, 81
Frye, Theodore 80

G
Genovese, Eugene 2
Gospel 75ff
Granger, Lester 78
Great Awakening 62
Great Depression 76

H
Hawkins, Edwin 81, 83
Hayes, Rutherford 70
Heilbut, Tony 78
Hicks, H. Beecher, Jr. 79
High God 51
Holiness Church 72

J
Jackson, Mahalia 80
Jazz 53
Johnson, James Weldon, 76

K
King, B.B. 55
King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1, 17, 58, 80, 81, 84
Knight, Gladys 82
Ku Klux Klan 71

L
Londonderry 85

M
Martin, Sallie and Roberta 80
Mask and Symbol 60
Mather, Cotton 29
Monti, John 51
Mitchell, Henry H. Jr. 5
Monotheism 10
Morris, Kenneth 80
Music Tree 52

N
National Urban league 2
New York Times 20
Nixon, Richard 1

O
oral tradition 28, 49, 59

P
Plessy vs Ferguson 1
Post-reconstruction 51
Index
(continued)

Q
Quartet Phenomenon 81

R
Rag-time 53
Rainey, Ma 76
Reagan, Ronald 8
Reconstruction 1, 52, 70
Red Summer 76
Redding, Otis 55, 82
Rhythm and Blues 53
Richard, Little 55
Russell, Bertrand 58

S
Smith, Bessie 76
Soul Music 82
Soweto 85

T
Taylor, Gardner 16

Tillich, Paul 20
Time Magazine 20
Tindley, C.A. 76, 84
traditional African religion 51

U
Utterbach, Clinton 83

V
Vaugh, Sarah 82
Virginia Union University 5, 16

W
Ward, Clara 80
Washington, Dinah 82
Wesley, John and Charles 68
Whalum, K.T. 17
Whalum, Wendel 63
Wilson, Nancy 82
World War I 68, 72, 75, 80
World War II 80
BOOK LIST

Order Form

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH $8.00 #101
SOMEBODY’S CALLING MY NAME 15.00 #102
SOUL OF BLACK WORSHIP 6.95 #103
ROAD TO DAMASCUS 10.00 #104
COMMON THIEVES 5.95 #105
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS I 7.95 #106
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS II 7.95 #107
SPIRITS THAT DWELL IN DEEP WOODS III 6.95 #108
THE KEIDANREN PAPERS OF TOKYO 6.00 #109
GOSPEL IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN 7.50 #110
OCCASIONAL PAPERS OF A REVOLUTIONARY 14.95 #111
AFROCENTRISM AND CHRISTIAN FAITH 8.95 #112

VIDEOS

Confession of An Ex-Crossmaker [30 min.] 19.95 #201
The Music Tree [60 min.] 30.00 #202

Make all checks and money order to
WYATT TEE WALKER, 132 W. 116th Street, New York City 10026

Item # _____ Quantity _____ Title _____ Price _____ TOTAL _____

Please include name, address and zip. Shipping extra.
About The Author

WYATT TEE WALKER is Senior Minister of the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in New York City. Jesse Jackson has called him "Harlem's Renaissance Man" because of his multiple gifts and varied careers. Since 1979, he has distinguished himself as a prolific author and essayist. Spirits That Dwell in Deep Wood II, the second of a three-volume work, firmly establishes him as one of the nation's top authorities on the music of the African American church. Walker's landmark work in the field, Somebody's Calling My Name is considered a classic in many quarters. The Spirits series has explored ground previously untouched in the folklore of American music. More than a decade of research and collecting has borne fruit that must be considered pioneer work in the field of ethnomusicology.

Dr. Walker enjoys a enviable reputation as a preacher/pastor in the national community. A double-graduate of Virginia Union University (B.S., 1950, M.Div., 1953) and holds an earned doctorate from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School (1975). His graduate studies have taken him to the University of Ife in Nigeria and the University of Ghana at Legon.

An energetic businessman as well as pastor, Walker has developed more than 33 million dollars of affordable housing in Central Harlem under the aegis of the Canaan church. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Freedom National Bank where he was a director for ten years. He was once the Pulpit Minister of the Abyssinian Baptist Church and spent a decade as Urban Affairs Specialist to Nelson Rockefeller.

Widely traveled abroad, this Harlem pastor has been active in the international peace movement and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and Namibia. In the early Sixties, Walker was Chief of Staff to Martin Luther King, Jr. and presently serves as Special Assistant to Jesse Jackson. An exhibiting artist as well as a composer of sacred music., this is Dr. Walker's eighth book.

This is the fifth printing of Souls of Black Worship and one of Walker's more popular titles of his fourteen published works.

ISBN 0-937644-01-3

The Martin Luther King Fellows Inc. is a non-profit society of scholars who specialize in the history and dynamics of the Afro-American religious experience. Martin Luther King Press is a wholly owned subsidiary with its publishing office at 132 West 116th Street in New York City 10026.