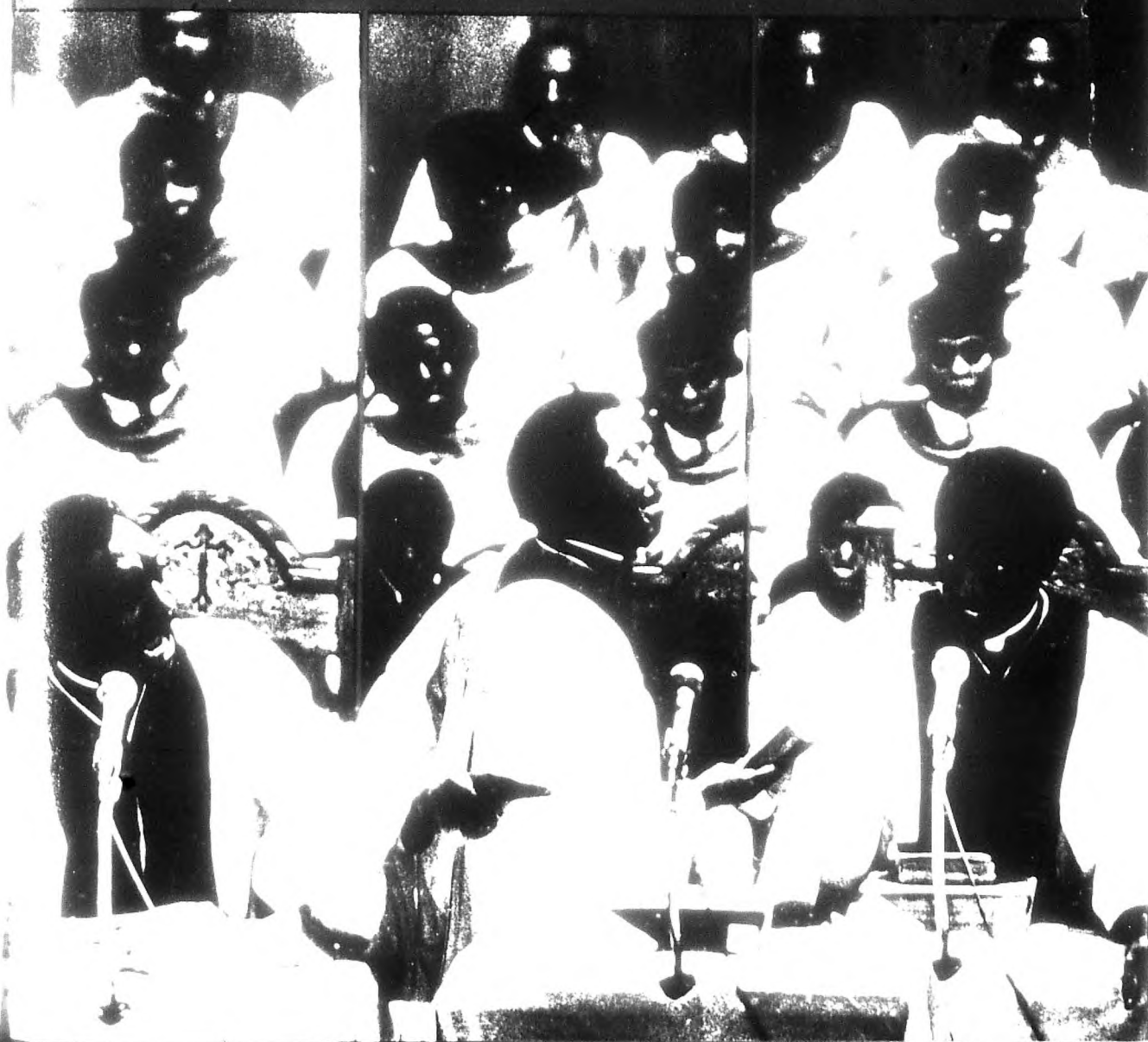


APRIL 1972

HOME MISSIONS

LIBERATION ON SUNDAY:
THE
BLACK CHRISTIAN
EXPERIENCE



I AM BLACK MAN

PHOTO BY KNOLAN BENFIELD

I am a black man,
born in slavery, nurtured in neglect.
I am 50 years old,
and still called "boy."
I am "granny" when I have no grandchildren.
I am "darky" when my back is turned.
I am "nigger." Lowdown. Evil. Crazy."
These words bite into me.
My children point at me and call me "him."
My wife calls me "that one."
You call me "nigger."
And I wonder who am I.

For six days I am no one,
a human creature fashioned from the dust
of a gentle loving Sculpturer
in the first day's light.
I am non-person, torn apart by the subtle insistence
of apathy and prejudice.
But on Sunday,
in my church,
I get all together.
In the rhythm of my being,
I find integrity, I find wholeness.
I am someone in my black church.

Mother. Father. Comforter. Defender.
My black church is a social place,
a freedom house, a culture center,
the reservoir of my spiritual legacy.
The song of my soul.

The agony of racism is the birth pang
of my black church.
In its unique deep-throated scream
comes the indictment and commitment
of western culture.
My black church converts oppression into poetry,
exploitation into creative force,
humiliation into hunger for justice,
haunting fears into hymns of faith.

I am 20 million from 20
who came first to this land 350 years ago.
I braved Jamestown winters
and Plymouth snows
with Christians who believed
no other Christian should be held in bondage.
But such ideals proved fragile
beneath the weight of cotton blossoms,
and I became worth more as a slave
than as an object of Christian brotherhood.
I was poured into the agricultural Southland,
one product in the dirty triangle trade—
whose other angles were Africa and New England—
the triangle trade that impoverished men's souls
while enriching their pockets.

I became property.
And no longer a human being.

Secure in his God, the Christian feared me.
I was his "thing," seven days a week
and Sunday was no day of rest for me.
Christianity makes men equal
and equal men are difficult to subdue.
My master knew this,
and he hid his God from me:
to him, my black body needed Christ
no more than a candlewick needs salvation.

But no man hides God
and Christian men saw the evil and injustice
in my chains.
To my field of cotton,
as I labored with bowed, sweat-wet back,
came Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians.
They brought me news of God
and Jesus Christ.
And they gave me a tradition of freedom
to be me, myself, in the company of my Creator.
They offered me a worship
that let me dance and weep and laugh and shout
and speak to God in the waves of my being,
out of my sorrow, out of my joy.

My black church is loose, free, unstructured.
From its roots it knows no letters,
feels the crush of no irons;
in slavery I knew no letters,
prayer books did not fit in my hip pockets
as I picked the South's puffy wealth.
But as the sun made its journey,
as the earth made its revolution,
I looked toward the setting of day
and I had prayers inside me . . .

"This evening, our heavenly Father,
it's once more and again
your humble servant,
knees bent and body bowed one more time.
And as I bow, I want to thank you
for my last night's lying down.
I want to thank you for a guardian angel
that you sent to watch over me
all night long while I slumbered and slept.
I want to thank you because you touched me
with a finger of love this morning,
and woke me up on due time.
I yet have the activity of my limbs
and my tongue was not cleaved
to the roof of my mouth.
I was yet in a gospel land and a
Bible-reading country. . . ."

Continued



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PHOTO BY DON RUTLEDGE

The music of my walk,
The sway of my heritage,
The expression of my love was growing,
I was in my womb.
I stepped the balconies
Back seats of your white church.
It closed its doors against me
I said I was slave
I was Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist.
I slave I would remain.
I rode hard over Christianity,
I denominations were rent,
I was the key to the kingdom of cotton.
I had to find Jesus I had to find
I had church I had to build,
You gave me no choice,
I wanted not in your palaces of marble
and colored glass.

Born amidst political and social upheaval,
My black church is strongest when storms rage.
I know what it means
to walk to school with a lunch
wrapped in a greasy brown bag;
I know what it means to be told to move
and have nowhere to move to;
I know what it means to be required to pay up
when I have nothing to pay down;
I know what it means "to wet the pillows
with midnight dew"
and I know what it means to come together
with brothers and sisters
and honestly cry out my heartaching plaint:
"Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
a long ways from home..."

In my black church I found the solace and strength
to withstand pressures that send others to asylums.
My black church kept me from suicide,
kept me alive on the inside
while I outlived the slave master.

My black church became the vehicle of hope
in my hopeless universe.
I carried my heritage through the struggles
of reaching proud blackness,
evolving as first African, then colored, next Negro,
until today—just black.

And in the evolution of a memory
was the fierce awareness of a revolution,
a way of seeing and feeling and sensing
that separated your cold white church
from my hot black church,
distinctions deeper than skin tones.

For your white church was the oppressor,
mine was the oppressed,
and I found comfort and identity

in the testimony of the ancient Hebrews
who knew the ignominy of slavery.
They were my spiritual brothers
and I knew the God who cared for them.
I knew their God and could sing to him.

Oh, my song was different in melody and harmony,
sho' nuff,
but I was singing God's song,
from my heart I sang,
under the yoke of oppression I sang,
"I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."
Which of your white churches
has been tempered by such a furnace blast?

Your white church perpetuated American Culture
and racism, my black church practiced survival
and carried from generation to generation
my folk culture.

Your white church sang hymns from a book,
my black church sang from the soul.
When your white pulpit became stagnated
and circumscribed,
my black pulpit was open and free and dynamic.
In your white church,
who would have taught a Mahalia Jackson to sing
or a Martin Luther King to preach?

In my black church I found justice,
energy, education.
I found "you've got to reap what you sow."
I found dynamics in the "amen corner"
that not only made it impossible to doze,
but made it not even safe.
And in which of your white churches
do you find no sleepers?

Under the guidance of colorblind God,
I molded my black church with my own hands
and I breathed life into it
and it became our creation.
Now I run it, I design for it,
I live it and love it.
It is yet my opportunity, my promise.
My black church may be the remnant church,
the last creative force,
the best hope for redeeming the faith in this time.
The potential is great,
for this is the black church experience. ☐

This article is adapted from "Black Church Distinctives" by Otis Moss Jr. All articles in this issue are written by black churchmen who participated in a Home Mission Board Conference on the Black Church. Articles are abbreviated versions of chapters in an upcoming book, The Black Christian Experience, compiled by HMB associate Emmanuel McCall and published by Broadman Press. (Copyright 1972)

PHOTO BY DON HUSTLE

WORSHIP

A Concept of God and Neighbor

by Dearing E. King

There is no such thing as a Negro church. Or a white church. Church has no color.

But in the United States, the true image of the church of Jesus Christ has been distorted, defaced. Men created a white-only church, forcing the birth of churches for blacks. The results can be understood most clearly by looking at the worship experience.

Worship, the spontaneous consciousness of God's presence, is a prayerful togetherness, a corporate experience which takes place whenever worshippers of various backgrounds, viewpoints, social and individual differences assemble together to affirm their personal identities in an authentic sharing of God's presence, grace, power, will and purpose, not only for the betterment of their own lives, but for the lives of others.

When this cannot occur where lives level off, in common Christian brotherhood, other worship arrangements must be made. Hence, the emergence of the Negro church, and with it, the unique experience of black worship.

Negroes could be fooled about many things, but never about the church of Christ. Taught even by slavemasters that the church is a body of baptized believers in Christ, the Negro bent over backwards to be accepted into the only Christian community of his day.

But the white church was more concerned with immunity than with community, with disaffiliation than with reconciliation. Negroes were denied the privilege of participation in church functions. From slavery onward, they were humiliated, embarrassed, harassed, attacked, arrested and imprisoned for even attempting to worship in white churches of all denominations.

Even when admitted, they were relegated to the rear or the balcony, and forced to wait until whites were served before receiving the Lord's Supper.

From the treatment suffered by Negroes, it is a miracle they did not renounce Christianity altogether. Perhaps they would had they not psychologically separated Christ from the white church. By even the simplest approach to Christian understanding, it was impossible for even the least sensitive to tolerate such racist, unchristian acts.

To remain within the dehumanizing and depersonalizing structure of white American churchianity would have stunted the moral and spiritual growth of black believers. In the scandal of separation, the Negro church came into being as a thrust of black people for self-realization. Combining their unique cultural heritage with a new, refreshingly child-like faith, blacks developed a distinctive attitude toward and conduct of worship.

Basic is an unwavering, almost mysteriously realized faith in the absolute sovereignty of the Creator. This anchor in the Eternal was strangely delivered to black illiterate slaves, and they religiously transmitted it through worship to successive generations. Like the Hebrews stripped of their freedom and reduced to Egyptian slavery, Negroes relied on God's power to save them. Amidst inhuman conditions and animalistic treatment,

WORSHIP (CONTINUED)

they glimpsed hope and promise.

And their prayers were not empty.

"From everlasting to everlasting, from way back beyond back, before there was a when or a where, or a then or a there, you stepped out from nowhere and stood on nothing, and said, 'Let there be.' And worlds leaped from your presence like sparks from a blacksmith's anvil! Then you left word that whenever I needed you to call on you, Lord, I need you now because I have no one else to turn to."

This absolute faith is the key to Negro worship. Because blacks have been cramped into oppressive social structures, they had to give devotion to a Supreme Being outside themselves. When black people met to worship their sovereign Lord, it was because they knew only he could unify their disconnected, disorganized, fragmented existence.

Another distinction of Negro worship is spiritual creativity. "White church"—"Black church"—the terms obviously admit that the church has practiced birth control and, in the process, become spiritually uncreative and unproductive.

The purpose of authentic worship is to bring worshippers into a conscious relationship with God and spiritual relationship with all believers. True worship reaches its highest expression in mutual sharing.

Black people have always realized no genuine worship experience is based upon the sovereign power of God alone; authentic worship in the church of Jesus Christ must include both God and neighbor. This is what the parable of the Good Samaritan is all about: the activities of the priest and Levite were about religion; the spiritual creativity of the Good Samaritan was about life.

Spiritual creativity is noticeable in Negro worship because worshippers are actually involved with God and neighbor. From the inception of the black church, no Negro congregation has denied membership or seating because of skin color. Because of this, there is a freedom of expression and movement that enables black congregations to transcend time, place and conditions.

Worship in the Negro church has no rigid rules of order—the structure is too loose and free for that—nor is it handicapped by putting a time limit on God. A white pastor asked a black preacher friend of mine, "Why do you hold services so long?"

"We wait until the Holy Spirit comes," my friend replied. "You miss the Holy Spirit because you spend more time getting out of church than you do getting in."

The Negro church, through its spiritual creativity, gave birth to many black-oriented organizations, businesses and movements. At most services, time is taken to promote the growth of such agencies as NAACP, Urban League, Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The main features of Negro worship, however, are singing, praying, preaching, giving. All are characterized by the freedom of spiritual creativity.

No church has experienced music as creatively as the black church. Listen to a Negro pianist and you will agree he is creatively reaching for the lost chord. He plays people into breathless ecstasy.

Listen to the singing. Musicians and singers creatively improvise, composing something new out of old tunes. They may sing a song two, three times, repeating the refrain indefinitely, without conveying a sense of routine or boredom.

Without question, nothing in heaven or on earth is like a black preacher—and if he is a Baptist preacher, double the

dose. His contribution to black people in particular, and America in general, can never be adequately appraised.

The black preacher has offered optimism and a glimmer of hope in days of utter despair and deprivation. But it has never been easy.

Slaves were not allowed to congregate, and black preachers, who had to keep their identities secret, had to use creative ways of preaching.

A water boy might announce services by singing through the field, "Steal Away," and all the slaves knew to go to the swampy forest that night for worship. Another slave might be stationed at the "big house" to ascertain whether the worship service was heard. The next morning he would go through the fields singing, "O, I couldn't hear no body pray..."

Such creative activity, continuing with today's two- and three-job preachers, has brought about the most unique and effective ministry in the world.

The final distinction in Negro worship is the act of celebration. This unrehearsed, undirected joy amazes outsiders: what makes black people so supremely happy? Why do they make such noise over Christ and their new-found relationship with the Lord?

Negro congregations meet to celebrate the sovereignty of God. When they fall into one another's arms, shouting "Glory Hallelujah," they are celebrating the same victory that caused rejoicing when God led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, or when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem. Celebration in worship is the heart of the black church, for it is the only act of worship that no other body claims or attempts in the Negro tradition and manner.

No other people have withstood so much for so long. For the past 20 years, the Negro thrust for equality and justice has exposed blacks to vicious atrocities. But through the doors of Negro churches—and, thank God, a few white churches—all people, black, white, red or polka-dot, participated in sit-ins, wade-ins, march-ins and jail-ins.

A Baptist minister, Martin Luther King Jr., led people through blood, tears and even death. It is, indeed, a great tribute to the Negro church that black people have survived.

The genius of the black church is its ability to accelerate time by celebrating things hoped for, things unseen. Even the waiting has been a source of celebration.

Through worship, Negroes always celebrated their potential as reality. Long before Negroes could sit in the front of a bus, Martin Luther King sat there mentally that was celebrating the future.

In Negro worship, tomorrow has always infringed on today.

Negroes do not celebrate, however, as an end to itself. Color are our meetings merely to air grievances of segregation and degradation.

Blacks meet to reaffirm their undiminished faith in the absolute sovereignty of the Creator; they meet as witnesses of their own spiritual creative originality and productivity. They meet and worship because they need to celebrate not only things past, but things to come.

Blacks rejoice because they know the time will come when Baptists everywhere drop the color bar and together sing "All one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity..."

King is pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Chicago, and president of the Program of the Baptist State Convention of Illinois.

SOUND & SONG & SOUL



Netters' choir deacons open the door.

You don't attend a black worship service. It attends you.

From the opening moments, when the congregation chant-sings the Lord's Prayer, through the effortless, swaying songs, the lusty, euphonic sermon, the emotion-pregnant invitation, you are the center of a swirling, coursing world, a crescendo of interwoven song and sight and sound that focuses on you, overpowers you, builds to a climax within you.

In black worship, there are no spectators; all are participants, each washed by a wave-like intensity, a succession of rolling peaks that sweep in to pound, pound, the beachhead of your mind.

The uncontrolled, integrated use of music, the lyrical, lazy, lean power of the sermon, the heartbeat ecstasy of the invitation—all caress the fibers of your being. And you aren't surprised when a Sister cries out, overwhelmed by the

nearness of Jesus, or when a Brother openly, unreservedly pours hot, salty tears into his handkerchief at the confessions of a penitent, come forward by "restoration."

Throughout, the service of black worship is uniquely, dramatically molded and shaped by the black experience, outside the context of the black experience, it could not—or would not—exist in no way could it be transferred to a white Protestant congregation and retain its power, beauty, or spontaneity.

James Netters—the charismatic pastor whose church is pictured on these pages—said it this way:

"Without the body and soul participation, God would be outside our services. Our worship is for everyone—it's not a show, not a program you come to see. It's for people to get involved."

In black worship, God is the audience. The minister is merely the director.

The people are the performers.

Mt. Vernon, in the heart of Memphis' black district, is only a few blocks from Beale Street, where W.C. Handy birthed the blues. Across the way is a rapidly deteriorating housing project.

It is raining, a heavy, steady down-pour. By 11 o'clock, the auditorium is less than half full; it will continue to fill for the next hour, finally reaching 350 people.

Deacons cluster at the front of the auditorium; dull-white walls and soiled red carpet give the church a slightly used air. One deacon prays. Afterwards, without prompting, members begin singing "I Shall Not Be Moved."

Women ushers—deaconesses—dressed in white, line the aisles. The choir, brightly robed in blues and golds, fills the loft.

The service begins with a rhythmic, chanting rendition of the Lord's Prayer.

Continued



SOUND / CONTINUED

From that moment on, music is never far from the surface of the worship experience. It lurks, always ready to appear, barely hidden.

The choir sings "I Heard the Voice of Jesus," organist and pianist both play by ear, improvising and embellishing the basic melody.

The organist solos on "Look to the Cross," an upbeat version with a pulsating tempo that sets choir to clapping and audience to vibrating.

"You can't beat God he giving," Netters tells his members. Row by row they file past the altar, dropping their small offerings into a plate, while the choir sings "These Gifts I Know."

A deacon prays a long, moving prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Netters calls the congregation forward, to encircle the altar as he reads names of sick, shut-ins, servicemen. Face glistening with sweat, Netters plays an impassioned, concerned plaint punctuated with members' "Yes Lord" and "Thank You Lord" and "That's right, Jesus."

The prayer is long, a lamentation on meanness and death and sickness, a blessing of God, a plea for wayward sons and daughters. Netters breathes hard, wipes sweat from his forehead, face upturned. He closes with a thanks. "You been so good to us, Lord..."

As the congregation moves back to its pews, Netters begins "I Need Thee Every Hour" and choir and members spontaneously, softly join him.

Netters preaches with the fullness and power of a black pastor at his best. It is not so much what he says, but the way he says it, that moves his congregation. He is lyrical, passionate, humorous, blunt; his sermon is meant to be listened to, but also felt; it is a sensual sermon that penetrates the pores and goes bone-deep.

"Yes Lord." "Alright." "Yes, yes." "You tell it." "Amen."

The congregation is tuned to Netters' tone, and he bounces truths off them, catches their response, and surges on. He carries them to the cotton fields, to the days of salt meat for supper and Sunday-only shoes.

"You got shoes, I got shoes, all God's children got shoes..."

Netters is almost singing now, voice heavy with emotion and strength. Just below the waterline of every word is a melody, an unwritten hymn ready to be sung in the minds of the members.

Netters pulls out laughter, he jerks the memory, pushes the congregation into self-examination. He mixes painful anec-

doles with playful recollections; he mutilates seminary theories of three-point sermons and defies hermeneutics. As a leading civil rights spokesman for the black community and special assistant to the Memphis mayor—the first black to ever hold such a position in Memphis—Netters has learned to speak the language of his listeners, whether government experts or illiterate laborers. But he does not change with a shift of vocabulary—he is consistently the same man with everyone. Because he knows what he does, because he is skillful in his sense of audience, he is successful.

He speaks now to gut emotions: "God has a way of coming in now; God is in the right now... Jesus is the person I need in my life..." Netters starts "Somebody Out There Needs Jesus" and the sermon breaks into song.

"He heard my cry; he saw me falling in my sins. As long as I live I'm not going to worry... God is my salvation..."

"Alright." "Yes, Jesus."

Organist plays softly. Netters chants the sinner's name. "The door is open." Microphone in one hand, Bible in other. "The door's open for you."

One comes and the congregation applauds. Two others and more clapping, happy shouts. A girl in the choir screams; deaconesses hurry to her, fanning her with a program. She continues to sob quietly.

In other places, other members are swept up by the spirit. A woman, crying and shouting, is carried out. Across the auditorium, deaconesses comfort emotionally overpowered members.

"What a mighty God we serve... He is alright... Right now... He's alright... I'm so glad the God I serve is real."

Deacons at the front semi-circle Netters, welcoming those who respond to the rich, mellow tone of Netters call and the tugging of their hearts.

"Only believe... only believe."

Members, Netters chant together, choir sings, organ music wraps the auditorium in a snug, melodic cocoon.

When the invitation is finished, Netters questions the decision-makers. One 25-year-old girl, tears streaming down her face, tells how she almost committed suicide before turning to God for help. The tumbling words suddenly choke in tears and she sits down. Netters, moved by the outburst, wipes his eyes. A deacon turns his head and cries.

"Let every heart say 'Amen.'"

"AMEN."

Afterwards, Netters and deacons shake hands with members as they sing "This Little Light of Mine."

Members, moments before plunged into a paradoxical grief-bliss release, now laugh and relax. The choir singing/clapping brings warmth and community to the old auditorium. The vibrations of that service hang heavy in the air; they will remain long after words and songs fade into nothing.

Later, over a "fellowship" lunch, Netters explains the emotionalism of the service.

"Black worship's strength is its reality, its heavy leaning toward a contact with God."

"The emotional aspect is worth preserving. If you do away with it, you kill the power of the service."

"A white church will operate on organization; you have the institution and it will perpetuate itself. But the black church doesn't have the professionalism, the expertise to exist on an organizational basis—emotions hold black worship together." When days have passed, and the bright images of the moment have blurred, there still remains with you have a gut-level feeling that at Mt. Vernon you experienced a different relationship, a new kinship, perhaps, with God, a different community with fellowman.

And one old, tired gray-haired woman stands alone in the memory. She was a deaconess, whose duty was to comfort and control others, but she had been overwhelmed by the spirit of the hour.

"Thank you, Jesus," she wailed suddenly from the depths of her soul; her shouts penetrating every corner of the auditorium.

"O thank you, Jesus."

She was a maid, a worker, a woman who had suffered long hours for little pay and a backseat on the bus; a woman who'd raised children and eaten chilies and felt the agony of poverty and injustice and stark, cruel prejudice felt them without bottling up within her a residue of bitterness and anger.

And in her simple, primitive release, she had discovered one of Christianity's basic truths.

"Thank you, Jesus."

"O thank you. You've been so good to me, Lord so good."

"Thank you, Jesus."

"O, thank you, Jesus..."

—Dana Driver and E. H. Hunt



Music is an integral part of the black worship experience.



A deaconess comforts an emotionally distraught worshipper.



Netters prepares for the moment of decision.

PREACHING & MUSIC

Celebration of a Stolen Gospel

by Henry H. Mitchell

If the power of Southern Baptist pulpits were focused, with all possible intensity and spiritual creativity, on the racial problems of today, the South would be a land of brotherhood and quite plausibly the first area of the nation to solve outright the problems arising from centuries of white oppression and prejudice.

And, with a proper acceptance of this mandate from heaven, Southern Baptist preachers could set the world on fire. They have this confidence because the best of Southern Baptist preaching is surely kin to the best of black preaching.

They have similar qualities—a lyrical language, a poetry of the soul, a fusion of spiritual sensitivity and stimulating scholarship; and a dramatic involvement that includes uninhibited expressions of personal warmth and liberty.

Southern Baptist and black preaching were born, for the most part, in the same place and at the same times, and they have lived side by side for years. The relationship between them, regardless of the horrible atrocities, is, in form and often in substance, the closest relationship black preachers have outside the black world.

The relationship to the total Christian tradition is less recognized and more subtle, and to understand it requires background.

The gospel, Paul said, was foolishness to Greeks (1 Cor. 1:23); it was not intellectually systematic, but primitive. Paul remedied this erstwhile flaw by making his words to the Greeks as cogent and systematic as possible. To enter their culture and build on their strengths, Paul even quoted a Stoic pantheist.

It never dawned on him to ignore or destroy so important a part of Greeks' lives.

This inevitable and legitimate process of cultural entrance and adaptation continued as Christianity moved to Northern Europe. "Pagan" festivals—with Christmas trees or Easter eggs—were baptized into the faith.

I have no quarrel with this. But when Christianity was carried to other continents, cultural adaptability ceased, to be replaced with cultural imperialism and violence. Not only did it destroy the people it belittled, not only did it reduce the impact of Christ, it also impoverished the gospel itself by robbing it of the enrichment that has come each time the faith has had genuine dialogue with any culture.

The gospel today faces other challenges, other cultures with other strengths. But white arrogance has handicapped the gospel by assuming that white Western culture, much like the Bible, was *the culture* once and for all delivered to the saints.

As a result, black Christianity and black preaching have been considered outside the accepted and "orthodox" mainstream of God working in the world. And when whites began losing youth and facing weaknesses in their faith, they carefully avoided black models in their search for answers.

Whites tried coffeehouses and guitars, drums and dialogue, and so-called "celebration"—man, blacks have been doing that stuff for over 200 years. The white pulpit had only to look to the black for examples of dialogue and celebration,

but too often whites seem determined to settle for the narrow impoverishment of only one culture.

Which leads us to two points about black Christianity:

(1) The black fathers did engage in their own independent adaptation of Christianity to their African culture and traditional religions; and

(2) A powerful and relevant black Christianity resulted. Whatever blacks do that is different from whites, whatever they keep of their African roots, is at least as legitimate as Christmas trees and Easter eggs; it may, in fact, be more faithful to original Christianity, which started as oral tradition in a culture quite similar to West African.

Because it still deals with primitive feelings of mankind, while incorporating the wisdom of intellectual revolution, black religion in its best manifestations is a potent instrument of God in these perilous days.

And never a cop-out to the white man.

"Black religion was something white folks gave us," insist some black militants, "a game they ran on us to make us docile and pliable, to make us good servants who would work hard with no complaints."

It isn't true. For a long time, the white man didn't want blacks to become Christians. For 150 years, blacks had no concentrated exposure to Christianity, but during that period, many blacks became Christian—often because they took Christ, not because he was given them.

The vast majority of blacks indeed "stole" their faith by listening to what was said to others. In the process, they only slowly came to be what we now know as Christians, and along the road, they picked up bits and snatches which meshed with their original African religion.

There is a remarkable kinship between traditional African religion and what blacks practice today; whatever is really rich about black religion when compared with white religion comes from the African contribution, comparable to the enrichment of Christianity which Paul gave when he tried to adjust it to Greek culture.

Blacks little by little shaped their own Christianity. When they finally became "thoroughbred" Christians, they still had styles, moves, expressions of earlier eras. Some of the things we call "country" and "ignorant" are in fact descendants of the worship you can still see in African religions today.

When blacks worship differently, therefore, let it be understood that they have good reason for doing so, and the difference is too important to be destroyed.

Perhaps the greatest difference centers around black preaching and black preachers. They came out of slavery with little, if any, formal training, but they were guided and blessed by God. What they knew had been earned by listening, by picking up and assimilating what they could find as they went to and fro upon the earth. And they met the challenge of reconstruction with the Golden Age of the black church, when black preachers launched black businesses, black education, black churches, stabilized black families.

The tradition of black worship taking the center of black life began in those days, and it continues today, culminating in men like Martin Luther King, who had all the degrees including Ph.D., but kept the same style and cultural orientation that his preacher father and grandfather had.

King's power did not arise from his education in white schools, but because he stood solidly in the tradition of his

PREACHING /CONTINUED

black fathers, who held the best of their African heritage and culled the best of the white development, fusing them to create what we know as the black pulpit.

The black pulpit is based on a Bible taken very seriously, for reasons easily traceable to African roots.

In African culture, history was more sung than written, and even the simplest tribesmen had memorized huge quantities of material, proverbs and stories. In festivals, if a performer made one mistake, at least 200 people would say, "Whoa, go back..." Even though many were illiterate, they came out of a culture in which people memorized a great amount of information.

The Bible largely reflected the kind of culture out of which blacks came, and blacks adapted themselves to it. In American black tradition, the Bible quickly achieved the same kind of standing in their thinking that the old African proverbs had held.

Blacks used the Bible, not in the rigid Western sense, but much more flexibly than the hide-bound literalism that prevails among many whites.

Blacks are literal, but not literalistic. They have kept all the strengths of the so-called primitive approach to the Bible, while absorbing and integrating the intellectual world view. This has given them tremendous strength.

The black pulpit has been concerned, therefore, with experience, relevance. The black preacher preaches to a point, and he is very willing, as were Martin Luther King and all his forebearers, to deal with politics and any other topic that needed to be dealt with. All concerns are part of the will of God, and while the black preacher is a Bible-centered preacher, he is also a life-oriented preacher.

Intellectually and doctrinally, the black pulpit has not been hobbled by the crisis between science and reason on one hand, and faith on the other. In its concern for life, the black pulpit takes the supernatural in stride. It has not succumbed to the idea that you have to know all the causes for everything; to do so would do away with the idea of God.

In style—the colorful utterances and mannerisms—the black pulpit has openness and permissiveness that frees a person to be himself.

I know a preacher who pops his suspenders, another who rings out, "bless my bones." No one worries about these traits, because they are each person's flavor, and the actions are sincere.

The black preacher is free to do things his way and let God use him.

Symbolically, this is important, because black people live in a world without freedom; even today, the average white cannot imagine the black's lack of freedom. But the black pulpit is a place where people burst out of the bonds that have shackled them and are literally free. Worshipers share vicariously in the freedom of the preacher, as he does just what he feels like; and they enjoy this.

Language is a symbol, a sign, to tell people who you are. The black preacher gestures as he wants, and talks as he likes. In the black pulpit, language is not a status symbol; black preachers talk the way "we talk."

I don't look very black, and sometimes people say, "O Lord! Here's a white man. I know he can't preach..." but the minute "Ah gits up and starts talkin'..." the atmosphere changes.

Afterwards, people tell me, "When I saw you, I said, 'Lord, we ain't goin' get a drop this mornin'.' But the minute you opened your mouth, I knowed who you was."

That's the point. Ear image takes precedence over eye image. Any time you *sound* like folk, you can get them regardless of what you *look* like.

This brings up the business of a black Christ. A white man can paint a white Christ (and Jesus Christ didn't look like that sissy-looking cat). I can't paint a black Christ, for he was at least my color or darker. Just as visual images must conform to people, so must the ear images conform. People must hear God in speech that synchronizes with their own speech so much that they feel "he's one of us."

If we want God to be real to black people, linguistics must also be used to present a picture of a God to whom they can relate. No universal culture or language exists, and until we do, we must keep religion in the language we use.

The only reason we have different cultures is we have had rotten, different experiences. When the experiences are out and justice prevails and people forget color, cultures will fuse. Until then, black language will be an important part of a black preacher's communication with his congregation.

Black preaching also uses language to give rein to the imagination. West African culture is full of stories, some sung, some told. The black pulpit is conditioned by the story-telling tradition.

It's the same beautiful way Joel Chandler Harris' Brer Rabbit speaks. Harris captured what he heard black folks say; he didn't create anything, he was a secretary.

The same details, the same humor, the same pointed utterances and morals that make Brer Rabbit a classic also appear in the black pulpit.

People, regardless of color, will listen to a good black-told Bible story and never get tired. It's a proud tradition.

Style, imagination, freedom—these gifts of the black preacher are just being recognized. And the result is the beginning of a major renaissance of black awareness and pride.

Today's students aren't sent out to sound "white" and flunk out; rather to preach in the mother tongue to ordinary folk. They can translate Paul Tillich into blackese and correlate this with the Bible and teach people things they'd never known otherwise.

Today's students are relevant, they know what black folk need and how to give it to them. And they are effective because no one else in the black community can touch the black pulpit in influence.

The fresh recognition of the power of black preaching means the ministry is no longer an occupation you choose when you flunk medical school tests. It's a vibrant, living, creative opportunity for service to blacks and whites and one's God.

I also detect that the renaissance is shifting white attitude toward the black pulpit. I said whites have scrupulously avoided black models for anything, but I admit today many whites see tremendous power in the black church and the black pulpit.

With this happening, it is quite conceivable that the white Protestant church, which in some instances is really in death throes statistically (because the Jesus Movement is not church-related), may yet be brought back to life.

And the black church may offer the saving possibility to other whole church traditions as well. □

Mitchell, author of *Black Preaching*, is professor of black church studies, Coalgate Road, Divinity School/Crozer Theological Seminary, New York.

LET'S BE HONEST...

by Louis Johnson

I have heard much talk about the black church redeeming the white church or the whole church. I was born and reared in the black church, and I do not see this strength in it. When we get beyond our high-powered preaching and our "great music" what do we have to show for our stewardship? If Christianity is waiting for the black church to save it, it will not be saved.

Let's be honest. The white church is in trouble. But so is the black church. And no amount of black church uniqueness will hide that fact.

In the black man's march for progress and equality, the black church has stood proud and strong. Its role of involvement and its contributions of leadership have made it a singular voice of hope crying in a wilderness of despair.

The black church is more than a Negro center for spiritual birth and growth. More financial support for civil rights comes from Negro churches than any other segment of the Negro community, and Negro preachers have given sacrificially for the development of the race.

Black churches have supported black businesses, campaigned for black politicians, lobbied for black causes and "gotten out the vote" for politicians sympathetic to blacks' problems. Black churches have fought to better blacks' relations with government structures, with police, with other community groups.

Even today, we find the black church actively engaged in the struggle for first-class citizenship while calling men to a higher citizenship.

But just because the black church has done these things, Negro Christians should not be smug and satisfied. There are still golden opportunities and responsibilities for the black church.

In the surge of nationalism and the emergence of new nations, many doors are closed to white Christians. This gives blacks a great opportunity for foreign involvement.

But in this hour of great challenge, the black church is woefully lacking in financial support for missions, in know-how, in manpower and willpower. Compassion for the masses is shallow and too much money wasted.

Of course we have excuses. But the truth is we do not care! We are short on compassion. We have had the "Lord's Supper" too long on Convention money, far too long we have taken it and "divided it among ourselves."

Where are our fully accredited, A-rated, fully supported Negro colleges? We have none. In this age, we need them if we are to meet the challenges at our doorsteps.

Where are our hospitals, our homes for children, our homes for the aged?

If the black church is to meet the multitude of social problems and carry on the essential mission of redemption, it must cleanse itself of the self-serving practices common among its clergy. Black churches must loose preoccupation with themselves and reach out to the world for Christ. □

Johnson is pastor, Friendship Baptist Church, Detroit, Mich.

A Song of Soul

by Joseph C. Pyles

"Soul" was born in the bowels of the black church, and music—the sound of soul—is the heartbeat of the black church experience.

No other aspect of the black worship has so pervaded white culture. Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Mahalia Jackson, Dionne Warwick, Otis Redding, the Jackson Five—all these and dozens more came pouring from the powerful rhythms of the black church. The gospel sound of solid soul sells thousands of dollars worth of records each year.

Black music has influenced the Beatles, made common the names of dozens of black singers, and conquered a multimillion dollar recording industry. Black music has arrived.

And it all began hundreds of years ago in the humid, hot fields of the South.

Today's sophisticated black sound was born in simple spirituals, the bedrock of all black music. The black man was in chains, he worked from sunrise to sunset, he had no family. He was a man dispossessed, driven to the brink of insanity in the inhuman institution of slavery.

And all that was in him came out in the mournful, happy, emotional spirituals. For the most part, he did not divide his music into sacred and secular; All music was sacred.

Came home this morning and found the lock changed on my door/My baby left this message, that I don't live here no more/Lawd have mercy, Lawd have mercy please.

Even in singing of domestic problems, the black man appealed to a Being outside himself and higher than his slave master.

Black spirituals have furnished the initial tune vocabulary for all kinds of black songs—they are, in effect, the "mother music" of all other forms of black musical creativity.

Spirituals, originating within the milieu of slavery, were conceived in pain, born of suffering, characterized by pathos. They have biblical and/or theological content, from the birth of Christ to life in "the Upper Bright World."

Even later "mutations" of spirituals into work songs carry the same religious character, message, tune and rhythm.

No man wrote a spiritual. They are anonymous and represent the productivity of the group rather than the musical genius of one individual, although talented individuals may have emotionally and artistically influenced the group.

"I've got shoes, you've got shoes/All of God's chilluns got shoes/When we get to heaven, gonna put on my shoes/And walk all over God's heaven."

Spirituals speak of life and death; they reflect a promise of a better tomorrow, "a day around God's throne" as well as a hope for a brighter future on earth.

The austere simplicity of the spirituals accounts for their astounding beauty. Musically, they represent the most amazing economy of tonal intervals; they are easy to learn, remember and transmit.

Today's octogenarians in the black community are handing them down to the present generation, just as the slaves did centuries ago. Giant publishing houses aren't necessary to perpetuate in the culture of a nation such spirituals as "Go Down Moses," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "O Freedom," "O What a Beautiful City," and thousands of others.

Continued



nally, spirituals represent a proud heritage for the black Africans sold into American slavery weren't savage jungle fighters; captured through rivalry and war, they were craftsmen, soldiers, weavers, potters, blacksmiths, musicians. West Africans were skilled singers, especially antiphonal choral singing where one group of voices answered another, weaving and blending. "The style was foreign to people of European culture," reports Russell Ames in *The Story of American Folk Song*, "and early white observers of the slaves' singing and dancing assumed them to be crude and savage."

In fact, Africans sang in work, war, love and worship and had built a magnificent tradition of song storytelling to preserve the history, laws and customs of the people.

The spirituals were a kind of black folk opera, which blended song, dance and sermon into a living drama of contemporary concern," says Emmanuel McCall of the Home Mission Board.

Contents of spirituals also reflect an amazingly creative and fertile imagination. What could be more vivid than Judgment Day as described in "My Lord, What a Morning?"

"When de stars begin to fall! You'll see de worl' on fire. You'll see de moon a bleedin'... Den you'll see de elements a meltin'... You see de forked lightnin'! Den you hear de rollin' thunder! Earth shall reel an' totter! Hell shall be uncapped! De dragon be loosed— Don't you hear de sinners crying?"

As great as was their element of release—the psychological relaxing of slavery-induced tensions—spirituals were functional too.

"In slavery," writes Ames, "the Africans had to find new sources of strength: they protected one another from punishment; they pretended to be stupid; they broke tools; they conspired and escaped."

"Short of open rebellion or a daring attempt to escape, the slaves' chief defenses were cleverness and subterfuge, with which they had long been familiar through thousands of songs, stories, riddles and proverbs of West Africa."

Songs that appeared to be solely religious were really disguised protest songs or songs with hidden messages. "Wade in the Water," although sung at baptisms, was a code for telling those planning to escape that the way to fool the fierce bloodhounds was to walk upstream.

"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" was not referring to heaven but the underground railway, which carried the slaves northward to freedom. And "Good News, the chariots coming, I don't want to be left behind" was a code for announcing the arrival of the wagon.

The list is long: "Folla de Drinkin' Gou'd" was a spiritual telling slaves to follow the drinking-gourd-shaped "Big Dipper" to find their way north; "Deep River, My Home is Over Jordan" refers to the Ohio River and freedom.

From the foundation of the spiritual's simple beauty, blacks, as they grew in musical sophistication, could build a musical home: the gospels.

These highly animated, rhythmically syncopated arrangements are jazz improvisations of older spirituals and hymns. But they retain the intense level of emotional appeal of their musical ancestry. One cannot effectively sing gospels with their accentuated and polyrhythmic patterns of unmitigated hard rock sound, in a detached attitude of cool manipulation.

A singer can't "fake it," in other words; rather he must

enter into the substance and nitty-gritty of the flow and message in order to convincingly convey the gospel song's concerns. Consequently, those who sing gospels often go into a frenzy, for the elements of gospel music are capable of producing a state of ecstasy—men and women screaming, falling to the floor, running and shouting. The result is an astoundingly total musical experience, sought by many people today, both black and white.

Gospel music has been popularized, secularized and commercialized by such artists as Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson, Rosetta Thorpe, Ethel Waters and the Staple Singers.

Perhaps the most popular black gospel singer is James Cleveland, a gravel-voiced, 38-year-old Baptist preacher from Chicago who has sold seven million records in the past 10 years. Cleveland considers his singing "a part of the total religious experience," and for this reason, will perform only in churches or concert halls.

In the fundamentalism of the black church, in fact, gospel singers who leave the church are no longer accepted within the context of the black religious community, McCall says.

The unique sound of gospel music has, meanwhile, gained wide acceptance and acclaim in the white world and this has accelerated its value in the black church which gave it birth.

Blacks have also picked up white revivalistic hymns, such as "Blessed Assurance," "He Lifted Me," "In the Garden," which are musically freer, more emotional, and embrace a personal theology. They lend themselves to the improvisations and mutations enjoyed by an enthusiastic black congregation.

Standard Protestant hymns, from "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" to "Faith of Our Fathers," also find their place in the black worship experience. But they are usually choir numbers, sung as written with few or no embellishments.

To be able to sing anthems indicates a high level of technical, liberated musical attainment, and blacks are finding more and more satisfaction in Christmas oratorios and Easter cantatas. They represent emancipation, education and the freedom to understand and reflect the highest in white musical culture.

Even worshippers who tolerantly listen to anthems take pride in being able to listen to the musicians who perform them. Their presence in the worship service indicates that the congregation has "arrived."

All together, black music runs a gamut from classical anthems to jazzy, improvised gospels—a splendid variety found in no other worship experience.

Only in the black church is such a smorgasbord of music integrated, presented and sustained within a unified experience of worship. And the black worshipper is free to move easily between all types.

Yet, out of the common black experience, all blacks find identity in music.

A Simmons University co-ed, the Prima Donna for *Inflammatus*, was singing in the auditorium of a black church in Louisville, Ky. She hit a high C and held it with all the vocal skill and intensity of "soul power." A black preacher, previously inhibited by his schooling, rose to his feet, made his way from the rear of the church to the front, raised both hands to heaven and cried aloud:

"It's alright, Lord, yes sir, it's alright!"

This is the greatness of the black musician. ☐

Pyles is pastor of Pleasant View Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., and professor of church music at Simmons Bible College.

OUTREACH

Agent of Liberation and Reconciliation

by W.J. Hodge

Greeks have railed against the black church, asserting it to be inopiate, dulling black people's senses to their miserable plight. In his *Black Religion*, Joseph Washington Jr. says, "Actually from the beginning, Negroes were introduced to the rewards of Christianity for the good of the planters in this world and for the good of the slaves in the world beyond." Perhaps. But consider two points.

First, look at what blacks endured:

The brutality, dehumanization, satanic evil of slavery; the debauchery of Reconstruction with the development of a system of politics fashioned on grandfather clauses, poll taxes and white primaries; inane legal definitions of "niggers"; de-education designed to perpetuate the myth of racial superiority and degrading isolation from avenues of entrance into the American system; and development of an economic system based on resurrection of the old plantation ethic of ill-gotten gains, including encouragement to steal, which bound blacks to their masters with iniquitous bonds of loyalty.

The very origin of the black church was a movement of liberation and quasi-black religious nationalism. Negroes were in a strange land, singing the Lord's song by the waters of the Mississippi.

With this heritage, if the black church offered no more than help to survive by promising a better world by-and-by, it is valid.

Second, the paradoxical fact is that white America conceived black worship, yet constantly stood in fear of the rise of the Negro church. For a good reason.

In 1800, Gabriel Prosser, a slave, planned a revolt in Richmond, Va., using the Bible "to describe how slaves could assume the posture of Israelites and discharge the bonds of slavery with the aid and comfort of God."

In 1822, Denmark Vesey led members of the Negro Methodist church in an uprising in Charleston, S.C.

Nat Turner, a Baptist exhorter and mystic, spent months in prayer and Bible study before planning the insurrection that bloodied South Hampton County, Va., in 1831.

These instances were not isolated; slaveowners recognized the explosive, revolutionary power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and state legislatures responded with harsh laws to restrict the assembly of Negroes.

I make this point as preface to this fact: the black church's outreach has always extended beyond the walls of correct doctrine, Bible teaching and Sunday meetings. For the black man, God in his most authentic expression, has always been the God of liberation, the God who sets the captives free.

Understanding this makes it clear that black church outreach had to overcome obstacles.

(1) Serious physical and mental damage was done in selling, buying and transporting slaves from Africa. Bought for beads and rum, "they were held in barracks, a euphemistic term for concentration camps at the time..." writes Franklin Frazier in *The Negro Church in America*.

"This period of dehumanization was followed by the 'middle passage,' the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to the slave markets of the West Indies and finally the indigo, tobacco, and cotton plantations of the United States. During the Middle Passage, Negroes were packed spoon-fashion in the slave ships where no regard was shown for sex or age differences..."

(2) The size of the plantation and slave orientation destroyed peoplehood. The majority of slaves worked on small farms and small plantations, with little outside contacts. New slaves were gradually accustomed to work by being distributed in small numbers among old slaves.

(3) In order to better tap slave lines of communication, blacks were prohibited from preserving or using their own language.

(4) The plantation system loosened all social bonds and destroyed the traditional basis of social cohesion.

(5) The mobility of the slave system prohibited cohesion between people. The American slave system made insecure and precarious the most elementary form of social life, the family. No legal marriage was performed and all relationships were temporary, dependent upon the will of the white masters and the exigencies of the plantation regime.

Additional barriers were imposed by the white church, which

(1) excluded blacks from the ethical and moral protection of the church

(2) gave divine sanction and reinforcement to the system of slavery

(3) incorporated into its own life and practices the separatists ways of society, illustrated by the establishment of "nigger balconies," and the denial of "equal accommodations" and equal access to the ministerial services and resources of the church. "Negro pews" were often painted black, a derogatory sign in those days. Frequently blacks were not allowed to enter the church at all; they listened through open doors and windows. Whites refused to share the Lord's Supper with them. Slaves took the Lord's Supper in the church basement or after the whites had gone home.

If Cowper's famous "God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform," needed historical validation, the rise of the black church under such adverse circumstances is it.

Despite restrictions—fugitive slave laws, laws of illegal assembly, lack of formal education, little or no money—the black church developed. Somehow, by God's grace working through black slaves and liberated white Christians, slaves discovered the explosive power of this gospel and stretched forth their wings of obedience to the Great Commission.

These "unlearned, unlettered, non-human beings" realized the importance of education and developed schools to teach themselves and their offspring. Black church groups—primarily African Methodism and Negro Baptists—founded numerous schools, which, says black historian Carter Woodson, "in spite of the increasing influence of the public schools, church schools have continued, and in poverty have produced outstanding men of the race."

Most movements among Negroes owe their success to the leadership of Negroes prominent in the church.

The black church has served as a newspaper, a forum for black expression, a school for the development of orators

Continued

OUTREACH /CONTINUED

who have impressed the world as the inspired spokesmen of a persecuted people.

For many decades the black church was the only welfare agency blacks had. Even now, in crisis situations, it serves this purpose.

Wherever you find a black owned and operated hospital, the church was a source of inspiration, funds and public relations. Rural and big-city churches formed burial and benevolent societies, credit unions and insurance companies. The church supported young physicians, morticians, teachers, businessmen.

In earlier years, many blacks regularly attended church whether Christian or singer. Barred from other social centers, they went to church to see their friends. Having no automobiles or parks or theaters, a young man would meet his sweetheart at church to impress her with his worth.

The church was the school of agriculture for many farmers who had to depend upon the black farm agent for new information on growing crops or the reception of new government regulations.

There was a time when, almost literally, the church was the black man's "ail and all."

Despite its history of involvement, in recent years there has been an avalanche of criticism about the irrelevance and impotence of the black church. If I were to say that the black church has lived up to its calling, I would be reckless with the truth; nobody is more painfully aware of the shortcomings of the black church than the black preacher. But to say that it never has been and is not now a significant part of the civil rights-freedom movement is to ignore the truth.

The black church has always been possessed by a significant degree of radicalism and militancy.

In 1830, Negroes met in Philadelphia to launch a series of conventions aimed at freedom. They deprecated segregation as unjust, oppressive, and unconstitutional. They stressed the importance of education, temperance, and economy. Believe it or not, they set aside the Fourth of July as a day of "humiliation, fasting, and prayer," when Negroes would ask for divine intervention to break the shackles of slavery.

The rise of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is another, more current example of black church involvement. Martin Luther King was influenced by Gandhi's power of non-violence, but when people marched, protested, demonstrated, and held their freedom rallies, it was always to the words and rhythms of the Negro spiritual.

One of the most creative aspects of SCLC is "Breadbasket," a basically church oriented black self-help program led by tremendously resourceful men such as Jesse Jackson in Chicago, Bill Jones in New York, and Andrew Brown in Indianapolis.

At this moment, black churches in many cities, from Atlanta to Pittsburgh to Los Angeles, are building low-cost, subsidized rental apartments, nursing homes and apartments for the elderly.

What more should I say? ... the black church extending the Kingdom of God in its native land through the preaching of the gospel and its worship; the black church establishing its own publishing boards and printing its own literature.

The black church, victimized because of the color and

background of servitude of its members, sending missionaries to its Motherland, India, Haiti, the Bahamas, South America; the black church rearing up new prophets who are scholars, who are evangelicals of a more relevant theology and promoters with a passion.

I do not mean to put a halo where one should not t anyone who has done his homework in black history that the church has always sought to change the black ugly image of himself as a "thing" to an awareness infinite worth as a person made in the image of the God liberates and reconciles men unto himself through Christ.

The historic function of this church is still relevant. People must still be inspired to endure, to hold on, to wake up and face the demands of the rising sun. Faced with lashes, polarization and alienation, the black church is awed as an agent of liberation, however hard or difficult it may be and however much our past oppression and humiliation causes rebellion.

Do you have difficulty understanding rebellion at the call of reconciliation? Then you don't remember your father, a grown man, calling the children of the white folks for whom he worked, "Mr. Joe" and "Mr. Jack." You don't remember going to the back door because you just didn't go to Mr. Charlie's front door; you don't remember being sent to the kitchen where the food was cooked and the dishes were washed every time you ate at a white restaurant; you don't remember a member of your draft board responding to your ministerial application for military deferment by saying, "Here's a boy, a black boy who wants to be deferred." ... you don't remember seeing the principal of your high school drive up to a Ford agency and the owner seeing him in that brand new Ford, saying, "Here comes Nelson, Nelson is a good nigger"; you don't remember two Negro prostitutes being run out of town because they were caught with a prominent white lawyer who remained and maintained his prominence.

And you don't remember Negroes receiving five-year sentences in the penitentiary for stealing a sack of flour and a white man two years suspended sentence for killing a Negro; you don't remember the white "ice-house" man refusing to put a 50-pound block of ice in your pick-up truck as he did for the whites, telling you, "Get it yourself, nigger-boy"; you don't remember streets being paved to the end of the white community and left unpaved in the total Negro community; you don't remember seeing a postman, always white, delivering mail only in the white community.

But I do remember these things. And it's hard for me to be an apostle of reconciliation, but this is a commandment of our Christ—ambassador of reconciliation I must be—all black pastors must be.

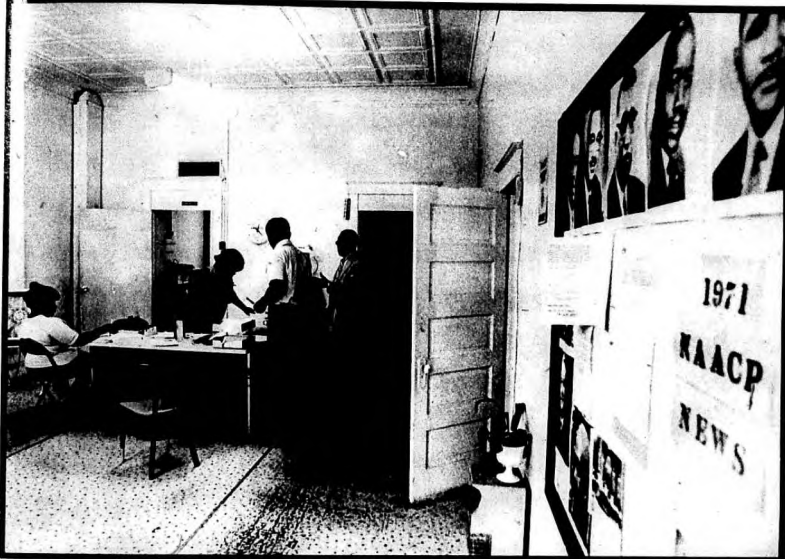
We must be Isaiah comforting the afflicted and the afflicted storming the power centers of the ungodly temples. We must sing the Lord's song in a strange and hostile land.

Without becoming victims of Messianic and cover people complexes, we must bear the cross of him who died to set men free. For this is the year of the Lord, the year, the hour, the moment to preach a full-orbed gospel to poor, a gospel to heal the brokenhearted, a gospel to deliver the captives, give sight to the blind, and set free those who are oppressed. **E**

Hodge is Urban Program Director, Louisville Chapter of NAACP, and pastor of the historic Fifth Street Baptist Church.

NEVER ENOUGH TIME

PHOTOS BY KEN TOUCHTON



Hodge with workers in local NAACP headquarters.

W.J. Hodge is a busy man. From early morning until nightfall—often much later—he's on the run, with meetings, appointments, people to see and things to get done. "And never enough time."

Hodge, a moustached man with slow-graying sideburns, is pastor of Louisville's Fifth Street Baptist Church, one of the nation's oldest black churches, and urban program director for the local NAACP chapter.

An activist, he has been involved "in the freedom-liberation movement with the NAACP since 1946," he says proudly. His participation is typical of the involvement of black ministers. One-third of the officers of NAACP branches are black preachers. In addition, thousands of black churches have taken out life memberships in the black civil rights

organization, accounting for a great deal of its power and impact on national affairs. "The NAACP would have been only a ripple in the mighty waters of justice if it had not been for the black church," Hodge says.

With 24 years in the ministry, Hodge has developed a philosophy of total church involvement (see previous story) that has led historic Fifth Street Baptist down new avenues.

Social concerns stimulated the church to initiate and co-sponsor building a 20-story, \$3-million high-rise apartment for the elderly. "It's just an expression of the church's concern for the physical welfare of senior citizens," he says.

The church annually contributes to the city's poverty program, and its voice is constantly heard on matters affecting

the black community. "When there are sensitive areas, we feel the church should get involved. If there is an action in a critical area that the church can take, we take it," the pastor says.

During the hot debates over Supreme Court Justice nominees Carswell and Haynesworth, Fifth Street opposed the appointments and, along with other Louisville, Ky., churches, sent in petitions against the two men's appointment.

Taking action in critical areas also leads Hodge into conflict with city officials occasionally. But he never lets the focus shift from issues to personalities. Says one observer: "He'll fight anything that will hurt his black constituency, but he never attacks you personally."

Hodge, a native of Texas, graduated from Southern University in Baton Rouge.



City Hall meetings keep Hodge running

Rouge and Oberlin College in Ohio. Among his post-graduate study has been work at Southern Baptist Seminary.

Despite his credentials, accepting the pastorate of historic Fifth Street Baptist was a big step for Hodge. Fifth Street had its beginnings in First Baptist (now Walnut Street Baptist Church) in 1815, only five years after Louisville became a city. Fourteen years later 18 slave members were given "letters of dismission," and granted the privilege of worshipping together "under their own vine and fig tree."

Henry Adams was the church's first pastor. After a few years the church moved from 8th and Market Streets, where it began, to Fifth and York Streets, where the church not only derived the name, but erected the first building owned by Negroes in Louisville. Several black conventions began in the Louisville church: the Baptist Women's Education Convention, General Association of Kentucky Baptists, Baptist Women's Missionary Convention and the National Baptist Convention of America. The church, now at 19th and

Jefferson Streets in Louisville, has always thrust herself into the black community, including organizing the first Negro school in Louisville; she has constantly provided leadership for the black community.

Hodge carries on the tradition, for awhile membership was strictly of persons. But Hodge's active community involvement has attracted younger people, and the congregation has turned from slump to surge.

Hodge was one of the three chairmen of the steering committee which spear-



After conference, Hodge pauses to talk to policeman



Fifth Street's high-rise apartment for the elderly nears completion



Hodge gives instructions to an assistant

headed desegregation efforts in Louisville in 1963; he is past president of the Louisville NAACP, Kentucky NAACP, and has served as chairman of the Louisville and Jefferson County Community Action Commission.

He and Fifth Street have taken action, gotten involved in the lives of their community—an obligation Hodge feels "everyone has" by following Jesus Christ. "We have the right to touch the areas of human life that Jesus touched."

—Sandy Simmons

THEOLOGY & REVOLUTION

Faith and the Black Experience

by John W. Fleming

Black theology runs the spectrum from fundamentalism to humanism, with varying degrees of differences between. But in the midst of diversity, there is a peculiar and distinct underlying unity based on the black experience.

As a result, three outlooks existing side by side characterize the mood of black people: (1) a religion of resignation—which has given up on the good life in this world and placed all of its hope on a life beyond; (2) a religion of accommodation—which attempts to adjust to and appease the status quo; and (3) a religion of liberation—which seeks to break the shackles of oppression.

At present, the third outlook seems dominant.

Much of the present emphasis on the black "theology of liberation" can be traced in a negative sort of way to Joseph Washington, Jr.'s 1964 book, *Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in America*. Here he drew three conclusions:

- (1) Black religion is a "folk" religion. Its uniqueness is found in its quest for the "elusive but ultimate goal of freedom by means of protest and action." In a word, black religion is ethics-oriented, stressing social protest and socialization.
- (2) Black religion has no theology.
- (3) In order to have a theological base the black church needs to merge with the white church.

Washington's controversial book was attacked from all sides, but it did succeed in stimulating the recovery of the ethical emphasis of black religion, an emphasis which had been misunderstood, misinterpreted and sometimes ignored. Many scholars, including some blacks, view black religion as compensatory and accommodating, by-passing this life to concentrate on the hereafter. A few scholarly voices had protested against this wholly other-worldly interpretation of black religion. In 1953, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* by Miles Mark Fisher pointed out the Negro spirituals contained hidden messages; their other-worldly language, he argued, had a unique, this-worldly meaning.

Washington's second conclusion, that black religion has no theology, seems a serious blunder since at the heart of black religion is a faith capable of giving meaning to the mysteries of life. Though crudely expressed at times, this is a theological basis.

His third conclusion, union of black and white churches, would be funny if it were not so pathetic. Even if integration were possible, the white church has no monopoly on Christian theology. The white community has a civil religion which has developed a theology of its own and which operates both in and outside of the white church.

In later works, Washington sees black religion as becoming the catalyst for making black lives more authentic. He warns the black community to guard against succumbing to a white materialist religion which avoids the Christian mission of suffering.

Through a black identity affirmation with the suffering role, cohesiveness will come to the black community. In a word, a meaningful separation on the part of black people

can pave the way for a later meaningful integration into the Beloved Commonwealth by both black and white through the redemptive suffering of blacks.

James H. Cone, a black professor at the Union Theological Seminary, sees the task of black theology . . . "to analyze the black man's condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ with the purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity among black people, and providing the necessary soul in that people, to destroy white racism."

Cone contends white racism forces black theology toward a new value system centered in black self-determination. Black theology within the context of black power would be only a temporary measure, for black power is a transitional movement. In the terminology of Paul Tillich, Cone calls it a movement from non-being to being. Thus, liberation is the key to a black theology of relevance.

Cone argues that "in a society where people are oppressed because they are black, Christian theology must become black theology." He defines Christian theology as a "theology of liberation."

The uniqueness of Cone's approach lies in the fact that he sees the doctrines of God, Jesus, Man, the church, the world and eschatology as having no meaning for black people apart from the black experience.

Black theologian Vincent Harding, director of the Institute of the Black World, Atlanta, attaches great importance to the communal aspects of black power, the brother and sister relationship of love for each other within the black community. In feeling, community will abolish the self-hate and self-shame created by oppression. Harding raises an important question:

"If it is assumed—as it surely must be—that black love must begin among black people and find its nurture there, can it be quarantined? What shall be said of a love that is willed towards some people and not towards others? Is this goal in any way related to the deadly disease that has afflicted so much of American life for generations?"

Harding finds no easy answers, but suggests two trends: (1) Refusal to hate may be a starting point, which under present conditions, is as much as can be expected of black people (2) It may be essential to have the freedom to hate before love can become an authentic response; one must know the negative to experience the positive.

Harding's theology concentrates on man and community, a new order from the old; black power is the implied religious source of producing the new man. "Black power," he writes, "has within it the possibility of setting black men in an entirely new light—the light of their Creator."

The most controversial of the "new breed" black theologians is Albert Cleage Jr., pastor of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, Detroit, Mich.

In Cleage's *The Black Messiah*, he stresses the historical Jesus as one seeking to give the people of Israel power to rebuild their nation. He rejects the Pauline emphasis of . . . individual salvation and life after death . . .

"We as black Christians suffering oppression in a white man's land need to recapture the faith in our power as a people and the concept of nation, which are the foundation of the Old Testament and the prophets, and upon which Jesus built all of his teachings 2,000 years ago."

The Old Testament concept of peoplehood and nationhood causes Cleage to establish a black nationalist theology with Jesus in the paradigmatic black revolutionary leader role.

THEOLOGY /CONTINUED

Cleage pulls no punches in answering Harding's question, "Can black love be quarantined?" "I tell you, you can't love everybody," he insists. "You have been trying and you feel guilty because you have failed. Forget the guilt feeling. Nobody can love everybody. So why are you sitting around talking about how you have to love everybody? ... You can't love your enemy. That is ridiculous. Love is only something for inside the nation. We'll try to love each other as much as we can. Outside the nation we are not thinking about love, we are thinking about justice."

Can these strands of black theology be drawn together? With one possible exception, all these thinkers attempt to operate within the framework of traditional Christianity and to draw heavily on biblical faith in developing their theology. What they attempt is reinterpreting biblical faith in terms of the black experience, while at the same time, rejecting what appears to be a white nationalist theology that makes allowance for racism.

Obviously this emerging theology places greater stress on the eminence of God, a God confronted in life situations. This does not deny God's transcendence but implies his transcendence has been overstressed. Black theology wants a greater recognition of God who acts in history, who meets us in the suffering of mankind, and whom we understand through involvement in humanity.

It is a theology which gives a larger role to man, calling for self-help, self-determination, self-pride. Man is somebody and the aim is to give to the black man a sense of belonging. Black theology's theme is liberation; not resignation, not accommodation. Man, black man, must be a participant in the move from non-being to being.

In black theology one finds the elementary recognition that love without power is sheer sentimentalism, just as power without love is pure ruthlessness. Black theology contends that the black community and the white community have been victimized by the imbalance of love on the one hand and power on the other.

God is love and power. Man, created in the Godly image, must reflect his power as well as his love. Anything less is dehumanizing. A happy balance would mean loving power for black people and powerful love for white people. There is nothing unilateral about the religious aspects of black power. It saves the black man from sentimental love; saves the white man from ruthless power.

Jesus is still the ideal, but the traditional image of him is waning and he is more and more the liberator.

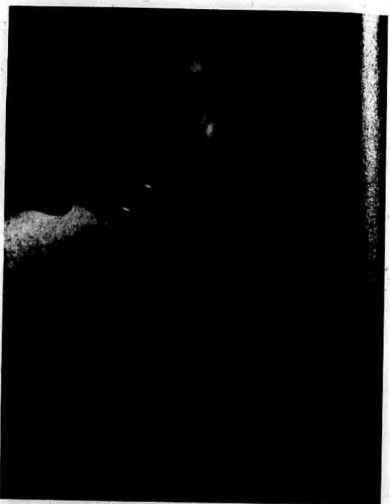
Community, or to be more exact, communalism, is stressed. In a spirit of mutual support and sharing, one sees an attempt to recover one of the major aspects of black church tradition, "...the opportunity to exercise (black) spiritual gifts among themselves, and thereby be more useful to one another."

The new breed black theologians are motivated by much the same idea. The strands of liberation that race through their thinking can be traced back to the "invisible institution" and the free black independent church, but they also reflect a contemporary attempt to crystallize a theology of relevance, to "understand the Christian faith in light of black people's experience."

As DeOtis Roberts, professor of Christian theology at Howard University, has written, "Liberation is the theme of black theology. Christ is the liberator and the Christian faith

promises 'deliverance of the captives.' It promises to let oppressed go free...."

Fleming is associate professor of African and Afro-American studies at Shaw University and lecturer at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.



Between Symbol and Substance

by Otis Moss Jr.

Revolution, in the Christian sense, is the end, the fulfillment, the beginning. The validity of any revolution from the Christian perspective can be tested by three questions:

What does the revolution end?

What does the revolution fulfill?

What does the revolution begin?

Jesus was a revolutionary, and anyone who wants to understand his ministry must study revolution. The revelation of Jesus ended Hebrew and Pharisaic legalism; it fulfilled the prophecy, and it started a creative movement upon this earth by which all men since must be judged.

Jesus' revolution is internal. It starts from inside and comes from revelation. Some have announced revolution without any revelation; they're not building, they are stumbling and falling.

We stand today between the blind and the asinine. The asinine see destruction as fulfillment. The blind look at growth and call it destruction, because growth is painful. Ask your church to try a radical idea, and you will see how pa-

laid growth can be. Try it on yourself. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." But generally, the truth makes you mad before it makes you free.

The black lexicon has a new definition of salvation: "liberation."

Don't let it upset you. Liberation means deliverance. It is the concept of freedom. If you have been born again, something new has started in you. And you are new.

A new man is a changed man; and a revolutionary is a new man in Christ. He's not a militant calling every white man a pig. Some have confused militant language with militant action; cussing is not radical. Anyone can stand on 125th Street in Harlem and cuss all day long, but he won't affect the Dow Jones Industrial averages at all. No one contributes to the revolution by calling some white man a vulgar name.

Blacks sometimes confuse the language of frustration with the language of liberation. They think their angry shouts are radical and militant, but they are merely expressions of their own frustrations. If you understand that, you'll realize a great deal about the black mood today.

Some blacks are doing more than talk. Some are crying "revolution" with old, rusty .38-caliber Colts in their pockets. But 80 percent of the time, those guns blacks buy to use on "whitey" end up being used to kill other black folk.

The gun's not the answer; it's the instrument of the slave master, today as much as in 1810. Violence—the gun—is the most conservative form of initiating social change.

The real radicals, the real revolutionaries are nonviolent. When people say to me, "Nonviolence is impractical," I know blacks have failed to interpret nonviolence meaningfully. The average black thinks of nonviolence as going out into the streets, leaning over and putting his head in front of a policeman's billy club and letting him split his head wide open. And then coming home bloody, talking about being nonviolent. That's not all there is to nonviolence; it's not even necessarily nonviolence.

Nonviolence is a mental state, and it begins at home. How does a father relate to his children, a husband his wife, a mother her family?

The black preacher who calls for nonviolence is asking for more than a willingness to be spit upon and slugged; he's asking for a dedication that is 100 percent Christian.

For the black church, the meaning of revolution is tied to the meaning of freedom—freedom which releases the individual from something, endows him with something, and relates him to something.

Revolutionary freedom releases a man from his bonds, and endows him with substance that gives him an opportunity to be free. And it relates him to God and to his fellowman.

Revolution is a conversion experience in a special way. It is the difference between symbols and substance. The cross is a symbol and I have attachments to it. But I don't confuse the cross, the symbol, with Jesus, the substance, or I'll end up worshipping the cross without knowing Christ.

I have an Afro hair style; it's a symbol. But what I have in my head is my substance. Some blacks walk around with an Afro hair-do and a "processed mind." They are not free, they haven't experienced the revolution that gives self-respect and self-determination.

Blacks need the symbol of the Afro, but they need the substance of the African culture and heritage more. And whites need to understand the meaning of both.

Many blacks are as bad as most whites in knowing African history. What do you know about what Hebrews learned from the African? ... about the fact that the ideas found in Hebrew writings existed in Egyptian literature 5,000 years before the Hebrew people got there? ... about the Ethiopian regiment that saved the Jewish religion?

Do you know how Egypt and Ethiopia shook hands and gave the world a foundation for modern science? Gave the world the hour changing? Gave the world sandals? Gave the world organized religion through the development of the priesthood?

Revolution is knowing the difference between symbol and substance.

And revolution is having the proper balance between love and criticism. One thing that drives young people from the church is that we have unloving critics on one hand and uncritical lovers on the other. We need critical love and loving critics. If you love me critically, you help me know what I can become.

Black church revolution is a teaching experience. It's learning what church really is.

A lot of white folk—especially young whites—turned off the church, but their church never did represent what the black church meant to black folk.

White folk got in the Movement. They were from First Baptist downtown. And they began to equate Shady Grove with the First Baptist they knew. Their definitions were wrong, but they confused a lot of black people anyway. They said, "You ought to burn the church down because the church houses a Bull Conner, a Lester Maddox, a George Wallace."

But they weren't talking about the black church. Blacks didn't baptize the Bull Conners; blacks baptized the folk who challenged the Bull Conners.

Revolution crystallizes concepts, phrases, ideas. But it doesn't stop there; it also teaches their meanings.

Some folk (more blacks than whites) got scared to death over simple words like "black power," without knowing what they meant. The classical definition of black power is black maturity. Black maturity is economic security; economic security is political ingenuity; political ingenuity is functional ethnic unity.

That's black power, and it's nothing to fear. Unless you fear indestructible self-appreciation and a sense of spiritual integrity.

Finally, black church revolution teaches that liberation is salvation; freedom is redemption; "right on" is a new "amen."

The revolution teaches that the church ought to be the focal point of radical idealism and creative realism. The church was made for the unfit, unholy, unrighteous, unworthy and unready. The church was established to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

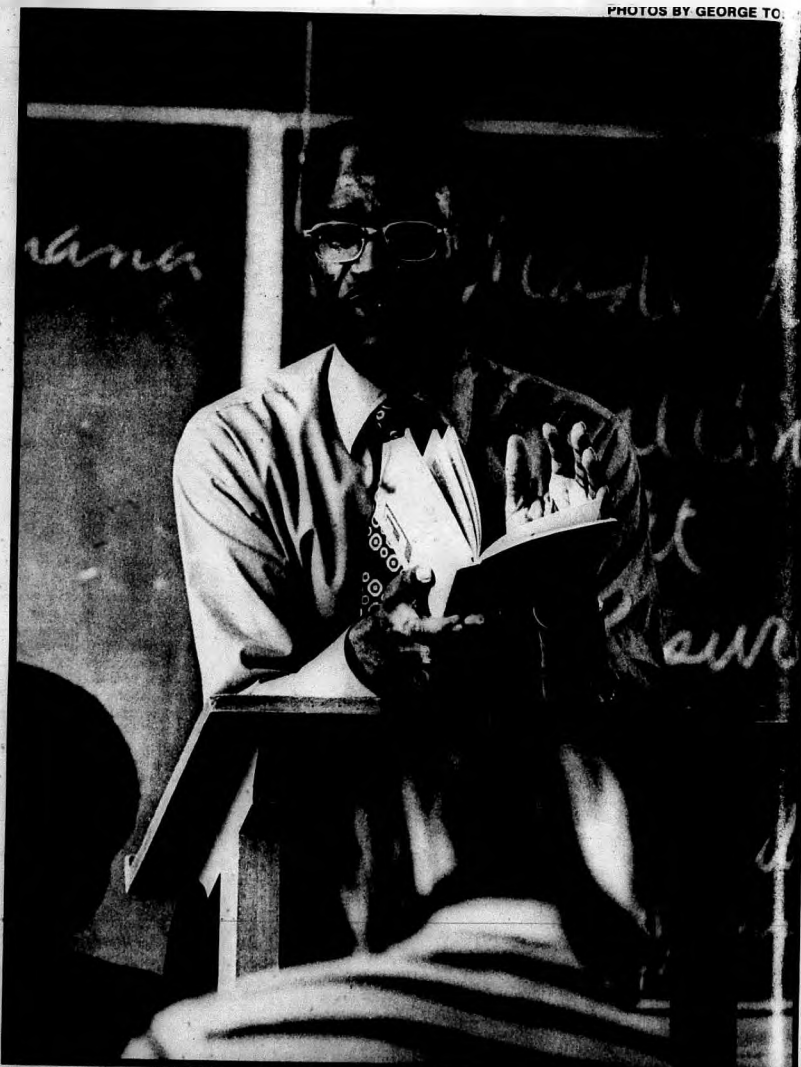
The black church has recognized this and taken on the role for which all churches were begun.

For true revolution, love and truth must be present. Nothing is more radical than love. Nothing is more militant and redeeming than truth. The church is the house of God only insofar as it is the house of love and the house of truth.

When these realities are present in the church, we can speak with unlimited resources to everybody we meet. "Come and go with me to my Father's house."

Moss is pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, and a faculty member of the University of Cincinnati.

PHOTOS BY GEORGE TOLEY



Rueben Scott teaching at Fresno City College

A LONG TIME ABUILDING

"I'd sure like to see him come here. He'd make a wonderful associate pastor and we need him badly."

A member of a pulpit committee of a Southern Baptist church was talking about a visiting preacher, a tall, penetrating speaker who towered above the podium and pumped the words of his sermon out with such force they bounced off the back walls.

The man's friend shook his head. "Why should he come here?" he whispered back. "He's a leader in the Fresno black community, he's involved in more things than you can shake a stick at. He's loved by his church and respected by everybody. He'd be crazy to give all that up."

"But he could do so much good here."

"Listen, Rueben Scott's going to do a lot of good wherever he is."

The description isn't unusual, for the 35-year-old Scott has come to inspire such confidence and trust in his years as one of Southern Baptist's few black ministers.

As pastor of Fresno, Calif. Providence Baptist Church—an SBC congregation of 350 members—Scott has moved to involve his people in a number of neighborhood projects, the NAACP, Urban Coalition, and other community betterment activities.

As past director for evaluation of the Fresno Model Cities program, he has gained recognition as a leader in the black community and a powerful advocate of equal opportunity and black self-determination.

And as a teacher at three Fresno area colleges, he has extended his outreach to influence dozens of students who come through his classes each day.

The continuous round of committee

meetings, the 18-hour days, the hectic/hurry-up schedules, the skipped lunches and cold suppers—all have combined to give Rueben Scott a reputation as a powerful, tireless worker, a man whose actions speak loudest: a new-breed black pastor who works equally well with black or white—because he is equal; an outspoken, honest co-worker who gives opinions freely without need of compromise; a black man proud of his heritage, secure in his identity, will-

ing to step beyond the generations of subtle, insidious black subservience, beyond the atmosphere of "yesism" that dominated black-white relationships for so many years, to stand open and unflinching, ready to be judged on merit.

But all this didn't come easy. Rueben Scott, son of poverty-handicapped Spiritualist ministers, the fourth child in a family of 12, Rueben Scott has been a long time a building.

Continued



Scott on Fresno City College campus



Scott and a student at Baptist-sponsored training center.

When Rueben Scott, a lean, lanky kid of 23, moved to California, he was "less than a year old in preaching," remembers his wife Margaret. He was merely a high school graduate, who had worked as a shipping clerk at the Austin, Tex., Baptist Book Store and who had, by some fluke, secured a transfer to the Fresno Baptist book store.

In Fresno, he joined a local National Baptist congregation. He was beginning to take his call more seriously, preaching occasionally and constantly examin-

ing the church for strengths and weaknesses.

"One problem I saw in the black church was a real need for better Christian education," Scott said. "I had been working with—and reading—Southern Baptist literature. I fell in love with it. It seemed like the answer to my needs."

(Today a better-educated Scott smiles at the memory of his first infatuation—especially in light of the "Becoming" episode. But he still uses SBC literature in his church, feeling it to be among the

best offered by any denomination.)

Scott also recognized the inadequacy of his own education. While still working at the book store, he began taking college courses at night, finally transferring to day classes. By 1967, he had parlayed the GI Bill, National Baptist/Southern Baptist scholarship and a few small helps into a degree from Fresno Pacific College.

He had already decided to enter Golden Gate Baptist Seminary, which he did immediately, with help from Jack



Scott talks with Jack O'Neal and Ralph Longshore of California Baptist Convention.

O'Neal, head of California Baptist Department of Work with National Baptists. Meanwhile Scott had been called to preach at Union Baptist, a small black church; after a short while there, he moved on to found Providence Baptist church.

"We grew by leaps and bounds during the first years," Scott said, "and we wanted to become part of a local Baptist fellowship. I had a strong Southern Baptist orientation, but I didn't want to influence the people.

"We had speakers from other Baptist groups come in, including Bill Updike (SBC area missionary). The congregation was disenchanted with local National Baptists, and after hearing Bill, they voted to become Southern Baptist. It was their choice."

Today Providence, located in 28,000-resident, economically blighted West Fresno, is a black congregation "willing to learn," said Scott. "They don't fight new ideas, even though the people aren't all young. The church is a mixture, the nucleus is old, but fluid, willing to move."

"We do have a strong middle group of 30 to 39 year olds, who have jobs and participate in things we do in the community when they can. And then we have a strong group of teenagers. In fact, we see a resurgence of teens moving back into the church."

Providence's outreach is geared, around Model Cities, the government program for underdeveloped neighborhoods, and one arm of it in particular, the training center.

"We have several task force type committees: a neighborhood council, food and clothing distribution, cultural enrichment conducted jointly with city schools—members of our church serve in these areas," Scott said.

"I believe the church should be involved in all areas of a person's life, meeting physical needs as well as spiritual ones. This requires political, social, economic action."

"My members agree, they carried much of the load while I was getting my education, and it's paying off in increased involvement now."

Much of that involvement, obviously, stems from Scott's years as director for evaluation for Model Cities. After helping in pre-planning during seminary years, he was asked to oversee key programs and try to determine why successful ones worked, why others failed.

The work was exciting, time-consuming, and at times, satisfying, but the constant sunrise-to-sunset grind began to sap Scott. "There were a lot of 18-hour days. When you're in a political arena, you can't afford to go to sleep."

Scott, as evaluator, judged the outcome of projects costing several millions of dollars, "and you know blacks aren't supposed to be able to handle that kind of money," he laughed. "We constantly faced obstacles to our way of spending money. Sometimes we didn't spend it wisely, but overall, the program has been highly successful."

One aspect of it—the training center—gives Scott and his fellow Baptists special pride. Scott had talked with O'Neal and others about using a recently purchased, disbanded Mexican-American church building as a Baptist community center, to be sponsored by Providence. But the project was in limbo.

"The idea of using it for another church was ridiculous," Scott said, "there are at least three churches within walking distance—including Providence."

"So when we found Model Cities needed a building for a training center, it seemed a logical use for the building."

Local Baptist leaders discussed the project and everyone agreed: a committee was formed to watchdog and coordinate the project, and Model Cities paid maintenance costs and taxes.

The center is designed, said Scott, to "zero in on the educational gaps of people in the community, as well as those working for existing poverty programs."

One example of success came when an Internal Revenue Service center opened in Fresno. People trained by Model Cities were among the top qualifiers for new jobs—including 40 percent of the training class of 120 scoring in the upper 20 percent on the civil service test administered to all applicants.

The concentration on education, from sponsoring a training center to teaching, was natural for Scott.

"He's always wanted to teach," said Margaret, a nurse. "It's been a life-long dream."

Teaching lured Scott away from Model Cities. "When the opportunity presented itself," he says, "I couldn't pass it up. I never figured I'd make it until I was past 50 and gray-haired, but I've had teaching on my mind a long time."

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And rotating between three colleges keeps Scott as busy as before. "I hardly ever get to see that man," laughs Margaret.

But patterns of a lifetime are hard to change, and Scott's is a pattern of going/doing/being involved. As the man said, "Wherever he is, Rueben Scott's going to be doing good." —E. Hullum



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BLACK & WHITE TOGETHER



New Dimensions in Freedom

Emmanuel McCall

America has been called "the melting pot of the world." Many cultures, languages, races have cross-pollinated their ethnic identities, Americanizing Italian pizza, Mexican tortillas, German bread, Southern hominy gouts, black soul food, English muffins, French pastries. What we appreciate in food we also appreciate in art forms, clothes, furniture and some living styles.

By acculturation we have extracted the best of these sub-cultures, marketed them for what they had to offer and synthesized them with other values.

We now stand at a religious juxtaposition. The black church tradition has several options before it. She can:

- still deny that there is any worth in our religious expression and adopt only white styles of worship (*Tomism*);

- seek to internalize our heritage and refuse to share it (*separatism*); or

- select the best of our religious heritage, improve upon it, share it with others to help meet their needs; and at the same time receive the best that others have to offer and synthesize it to meet our needs (*synthesis*).

The white church stands at that same crossroad. She can:

- continue to insist that only its heritage has worth, and attempt to make everyone adopt it (*paternalism*);

- continue to combine culture and religion for "White Only,"

- share her best with others, receive the best from others, and creatively restructure for the glory of God and the good of each man (*synthesis*).

My conviction is that the church has the most solid theological, philosophical and social bases for establishing community. In the past two decades athletics, business, entertainment, and government have made far more efforts than the church in helping us to be one. What has kept the church from leading in this effort?

Since the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) the church and culture have been in blending processes, often with fierce struggles to determine influence. Because the church has not always consisted of or been lead by persons committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, cultural whims, fancies and experiences have dominated its life.

We still hear such anachronisms as "God and country" and "My country right or wrong." As late as September, 1971, the United Klans of America assembled at a pasture near Stone Mountain, Ga. under the symbol of a "cross," with the theme song "The Old Rugged Cross."

Until we can learn to separate Americanisms from New Testament Christianity, the church of Jesus Christ will always be enslaved. Until we learn to examine our ideologies and philosophies in light of the person and

spirit of Jesus Christ, we will continue to grope in darkness. Until we accept the record of the life of Jesus Christ as the model for our daily living, the Holy Bible will be no more than an idol.

What can black and white Christians in America do to effect reconciliation?

I have already suggested that New Testament Christianity should be freed from the dominance of culture.

Another thing we can do is abolish paternalism. We are not our brother's keeper; we are our brother's brother. We have taken Cain's smart-aleck reply and tried to make it gospel. God never said that we are to "keep" each other. To do so implies dominance and subservience of one or the other. If we "brother" each other we recognize his freedom under God and his potential in being a son of God. Even Jesus Christ came as our "brother," not our "keeper."

Paternalistic feelings have expressed themselves since the days of slavery. Between white and black Baptists it has been expressed by: giving property to blacks to build a church house; giving money for church buildings, or building them; occasional or regular contributions to the maintenance of the black church and its facilities; paying the salary of a black pastor; establishing mission centers where valuables and foods are distributed to blacks; contributing to the education of black ministers; and giving support to black Baptist schools.

The relationship has always been a giving-receiving one, never the creation of purposeful fellowship among equals. Even the interracial worship services of the past, when held, were carefully planned so that blacks only sang. Rarely did a black speak. To allow him to do so would have meant that he expressed ideas.

Ideas are dangerous if not controlled. Control is more easily maintained in a paternalistic setting. If a man shares his ideas he thinks and thus is equal. In the society of the immediate past the goal was to be sure blacks did not become equal. Paternalistically controlled black churches have even dismissed pastors at the request of a white benefactor.

Paternalism is a two-way problem. Some blacks both desire and expect hand-outs from whites. They seldom speak their true feelings for fear of cutting off the benevolent supply. They will remain docile even in situations where constructive dialogue could be meaningful.

Now, younger and better trained blacks are emerging as pastors of more churches. Young blacks are not looking for hand-outs. They will not be intimidated, nor remain silent, nor sing only, in order to keep a supply line open. Younger blacks' theme is "Give me a chance to earn an education, and then to be gainfully employed on an equal par with anyone else, and I'll make it myself." This is not an appeal to separatism, but to the dignity and freedom of manhood.

This kind of black is in the ascendancy in America, but because he is not largely represented in the power structure of black denominational activities, his voice is seldom heard through those channels. The older black, who is in the power structure, has allowed his white counterpart to assume that "our interracial work is doing just fine," which loosely translated, means "Just keep the money flowing."

TOGETHER CONTINUED

This leads me to the problem of communication. In the past we have had faulty communication because some whites wanted to be the only ones doing the talking, and because some blacks said only what they thought whites wanted to hear.

The problem today is in attempting to communicate with confused terminology.

For example, many whites cringe with anger at hearing the term "black power." They assume this means "killing, looting, rioting" or they conjure up negative impressions of black extremist types. This is not most blacks' image of black power.

To blacks "black power" means the cohesion of black people in order to strengthen social, economic and political destinies. This is no different from the activities of any number of interest or lobby groups.

There are no valid reasons for becoming uptight simply because blacks decide to make their own decisions about that which affects them.

Or take another example: Some white churchmen have become discouraged because they invited black brethren to "come and have fellowship with us," but no one came. They use the word "fellowship" to mean a congenial gathering, with polite conversation, punch and cookies. Blacks use the word "fellowship" with two emphases. First, they use it to mean the exchange of congregational involvement. Pastors and churches exchange services on special occasions usually with the visiting pastor delivering the message. Other involvements include cooperative activities between youth groups, W.M.U.'s and Brotherhoods, or other church relationships.

Secondly, black churchmen use the word "fellowship" in reference to comradeship. It involves working, sharing, even suffering together. Generally, whites mean neither of these emphases in the common usage with interracial activities. The result of this communication gap is confusion of purposes, reasons and goals.

We must learn the basic principles of communicating for our day. These include purposeful listening, honest evaluation, creative input, definition of terms, the willingness to talk with one another rather than to or at. This cannot be done by merely reading or hearing about another person or situation. There must be personal, physical contact with all the anger, frustrations, fears, hostilities they incur.

Racially, we have been talking about, at and to each other too long. We must begin to talk with each other.

Misunderstandings may occur. But if one is persistent, he will discover the development of an openness, a freedom, an enlightenment that will add unknown dimensions of depth and learning; he will discover how valuable first-hand information is; he will discover how complicated we have made life through the use of traditional, mythologized fancies; he will discover new criteria for relationships with people.

More importantly, he will find himself. Blacks will learn to "dig the black scene," while whites learn to "dig the black scene."

To "dig the scene," black and white, we must seek to understand what each other thinks, says and does. Once we understand, we must then commit ourselves

to the courses of action most appropriate to our understanding, our resources, and our abilities.

Once we are "right on," we can expect unexpected problems from our new ventures in race relations. We can expect isolation from those who disapprove and disappointment with those who cop out. But if the task of racial reconciliation is to be forceful, men of faith must not abandon the struggle.

Our theme is that the black religious tradition is something of value for America and the world. The task of getting it all together remains. We must properly order our priorities, get our values straight, select the best that is to be found, and create the best that can be made. We borrow from several sources to synthesize something better. As this relates to the black church tradition, only black men can "get it all together" for black men. Blacks must decide what in black tradition is most valid and significant, then decide ultimately how best to preserve it, and how best to share it.

This does not mean to work in isolation or exclusivism. Blacks need the expertise of others: the disciplines of study, the products of past theological and philosophical research, the experience of business management, the priority of financial resources.

Black churchmen will profit by culling the best, from the resources available and "getting it all together."

"Spread the Sunshine" is the title of song often used by the "now" generation. It is a plea for brotherhood, for sharing, for love, for meaning, for purpose. Sunshine has always been symbolic of life, warmth, openness, health, joy, and blessings.

Psychologically America has experienced a decade of winter skies. We have become extremely polarized racially and seem unable to solve our problems. Somehow we lack the will.

We have become isolationists with age differentials. We have seen extended violence in numerous assassinations, mob killings, the destruction and maiming of lives both at home and in Vietnam. We have been shaken to despair at the extent and depth of our social problems, ghettos of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, subcultures. We need sunshine. We need occasions to smile, to hope, to know more lasting joy, even while we continue to struggle with the despair of bad situations.

Attempts are being made to bring in the sunshine. Some are experimenting with new forms of worship. Some are developing extensive social programs. Some are turning to occult religions and even drugs as the panacea for this spiritual quest. Some are giving up altogether.

Out of the black church tradition can come the kind of life and vitality that will bless the whole of our land. Blacks have known how to sing, to be happy, to have inner peace, to have unusual joy even in the deepest despair. Blacks, like the Israelites in Babylon, will fail God if we hang up our harps. Now is the time for someone to break forth with the music of Zion; not to entertain; not to commercialize; not to internalize; but to join God in his plan of world redemption. ☐

Emmanuel McCall, associate secretary in the Department of Work with National Council at the Home Mission Board

THEIR BROTHER'S BROTHER



St. Paul pastor B.C. Green.

It isn't often you have an opportunity to mend shattered race relations with a hammer and nails. But Texarkana, Tex., Baptists have that chance.

A year ago, smoldering racial bitterness and anger in the local high school erupted in a near riot. In the tense days afterward, five black Baptist churches were fire-bombed; two—Mount Orange and St. Paul—burned to the ground.

An embarrassed city promised that neither church would suffer and a drive to raise \$200,000 was begun.

Two months later, only \$24,000—to be split two ways—had been collected and the culprits were still at large. They have never been found—no one knows even if they were white racists or black militants—and little additional money has been received.

Contractors, meanwhile, estimated it would cost \$130,000 to rebuild St. Paul—much more than the congregation could raise.

So St. Paul's members resigned themselves to meeting in a school while dust from passing cars settled on the deserted, charred shell of their church building.

Then Larry Rose came along.

Rose, superintendent of missions for Bowie Association, offered help to B.C. Green, St. Paul pastor. Under the circumstances—and faced with a history of poor relations between Southern Baptists and blacks—Green and his congregation were skeptical. But Rose was determined.

Somehow the openness and honesty of the big, likeable Rose bridged doubts and conquered mistrust. He convinced



Alvin Hollingsworth and Wilcher Burness (right).

both blacks and Texas Baptists that here was a project worth tackling.

Carson Everett, an expert in church construction, was "loaned" by the Baptist General Convention of Texas to Bowie Association. In a series of meetings with St. Paul, Everett explained what was needed: seed money and muscle, which St. Paul possessed; and experience (and more money), which

Texas Baptists would provide. In addition, Rose promised help from local white Baptists.

A new goal was set: to rebuild St. Paul church. The cost: \$50,000 plus black and white experience and construction know-how, black and white labor and sweat together. Southern Baptists and black Baptists were going to create a new St. Paul Baptist church together.

Continued

BROTHER /CONTINUED

"It's been a revelation," says Rose. "We've talked and worked together as equals."

"We've changed. Prejudice on both sides has disappeared. Some men who would not have worked with blacks before, they're working hand in hand."

"The other day, after a meeting with Rev. Green, my wife asked me if I thought about walking down the street with a black man. I said I didn't even notice it."

"Two years ago I would have."

Past interracial efforts often have proved more paternalistic than fraternalistic. What keeps this from being another case of Southern Baptists being their brother's keeper rather than their brother's brother?

"Basically, there hasn't been a 'you do this' attitude," says Everett, a former pastor. "We've made all decisions together."

Although the black church needed Everett's expertise to get started, the church could not have been built without Green's efforts and his congregation's willingness to work. The result has been an atmosphere of brotherhood and equality uncommon in conservative East Texas.

"You could just feel, heretofore, that black and white didn't know each other," says Green, who runs a store as well as pastors. "Now we look at people as they are, not color, but as you are. And together, things get done."

Blacks and whites hammer and drill and saw, without regard to race. Week-day afternoons find six to eight of Green's members helping permanent employees Al Hollingsworth and Witcher Burnest. But Saturdays draw the biggest crowds—both blacks and whites come that day.

One Saturday, after the group had gathered to lift a newly completed, 100-pound truss to make room for another, Everett held them for a minute. He and Green thanked everyone for coming and a prayer was said.

Then Everett asked Rose if he had anything to add.

Forty and sweaty from the morning's labor, Rose clapped his gloved hands together and laughed:

"All I have to say is, 'Let's get to work.'"
—E. Hullum

Steeling completed 1,000-pound trusses—ceiling beams—to make room to work on the others.



Larry Rose and Sam Washington hoisting a truss



Comment

by Walker L. Wright
Editor

The Unfiltered Experience

Any probing of prejudice reveals the experience is a layered one. No sooner do you peel back one veneer than you discover there is another, then another, until you despair at reaching the source of the festering sore.

However, such awareness of these layers should not surprise us, for we only acquire prejudice through experience after experience. We should not be surprised that eradication of racism takes years, because we were that long in acquiring it. Neither should we be surprised that the deeper we go in exposing it, the more painful the sore.

Southern Baptists have exposed layer after layer of our overt and subtle prejudice through the years. In the process of overcoming the problems (which go all the way back to the creation of the Convention) we have moved from overt statements of prejudice, to passive acceptance of it, and finally to aggressive acts against prejudice, such as the adoption of the Crisis Statement.

Today we have reached the point where blacks serve on the staff of agencies, on boards of directors, where churches have not only black members but black pastors and associate pastors, where blacks are elected to high office within state conventions, and where more and more black congregations affiliate with associations, state conventions, and the SBC itself.

Much has been accomplished when a church like Columbia Drive Baptist in Decatur, Ga. can report a larger Sunday school attendance the Sunday following the baptism of their first black member than on the previous week. What a distance has been traveled since Tatnall Square!

The contents of this issue of the magazine are significant not only for what is said but almost equally because of who is saying it.

We have passed through a time when we would listen only to a white man speak to us about the black man, or about our own prejudice and the roots of it. Now we have reached the place where we will listen to or read after a black man speaking on this subject. Of course, there were exceptions to this in the past, but the exception was not widely heard or accepted.

Within recent years Southern Baptists produced a number of books by white writers concerning their experience with racism—failures and successes. These ranged from Tom Holmes' tragic *Ashes for Breakfast*, to my book telling of Oakhurst Baptists' *Struggle for Integrity*, and Wayne Dehoney's wider look at how Baptists see *Black*. Only recently, J. Herbert Gilmore, Jr. presented his messages to First Baptist Church of Birmingham, *When Love Prevails*, preached during crises arising over acceptance of black members.

Now Broadman takes us a step beyond these to give us two books by black authors. Released the last of 1971 was *What Jesus Means to Me*, written by seven black preachers. For the most part these are more sermons than personal experiences, but the volume is significant because the writers are black, and they are men who have had experiences with Southern Baptists. In fact, some are Southern Baptists.

Broadman also is publishing the material of this issue under the title, *The Black Christian Experience*. As you would expect, the book will contain much that the issue of the magazine does not. Such volumes move us to a welcomed level of race relations, when we can appreciate the strengths and contributions of others, and when we can hear them tell of their experiences unfiltered by a white.

Executive's Word

by Arthur B. Rulledge
Executive Secretary-Treasurer, HMB

Rainy Day Reserves

Now and then someone inquires about reserve funds held by Southern Baptist boards and agencies, asking whether churches and individual Baptists should increase the support of these agencies when they have unspent money on hand.

Every SBC agency is required to accumulate a reasonable amount of reserve funds. The Convention's Business and Financial Plan reads, "Contingent Reserves—Each agency of this Convention shall set up as soon as possible a reserve for contingencies to provide for deficits that may occur either through decreased receipts or through emergencies or both."

This plan was adopted in 1938 when the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, and other Baptist agencies, were in debt. The boards had been permitted to expand enormously in view of an invigorating fund raising campaign immediately following World War I. Through the \$75 million campaign over \$90 million was pledged to be paid over a five-year period.

The agencies were authorized to expand their work on the basis of their portion of the \$75 million, but severe economic reversal prevented hundreds of churches from fulfilling their pledges and total receipts came to only \$58 million. The boards and agencies had already committed themselves far beyond what came in. It was not possible to terminate missionary work fast enough to avoid indebtedness, and the Home Mission Board found itself over \$2 million in debt in 1929.

The Board cut back its work drastically, reducing from 1,656 missionaries in 1921 to 106 in 1930. The Board applied Cooperative Program receipts largely to debt paying and used Annie Armstrong Offering money to support missionary work. Those were dismal days, but through various special efforts as well as the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Offering, Southern Baptists

provided funds to retire this debt in May, 1943.

This experience led the Southern Baptist Convention to say: "Never again!" From that time onward the agencies have been required to secure Convention approval for long-term indebtedness and also to maintain some financial reserves.

At the close of 1971 the Home Mission Board had liquid reserves of approximately \$4.4 million. A sum of \$800,000 is set apart as an Emergency Reserve Fund, established by the Board in the 1940's in compliance with the Convention's Business and Financial Plan. Over \$1.4 million is in the Board's Memorial Fund, established in 1943. This represents gifts from wills for the general work of the Board, with no restrictions by the giver. Earnings are used by the Board for its current work, and the corpus remains intact for use only in the case of dire emergencies.

In addition the Board has on hand each January 1 the sum of \$1 million as an operating reserve. Several years ago the agency began the plan of applying Annie Armstrong offerings during the calendar year in which they were given, rather than the year after they were received. The \$1 million is used during the first months of the calendar year before the special offering comes in; it is replenished late in the year when the offering is completed.

The Board also has on hand designated funds totaling \$1.2 million, approximately two-thirds of which was designated by donors. An added \$477,000 is designated for special purposes such as disaster relief, Cuban relief, mission pastoral salary assistance and purchase of the new office building.

Reserve funds are invested in reputable stocks and bonds, and in interest bearing accounts in banking institutions. Besides the investment of reserves the

Board keeps its available cash in short-term investments. The \$800,000 Emergency Reserve Fund is placed with the Southern Baptist Foundation. In 1971 the earnings of all these investments provided \$303,000 for the Board.

These figures do not include the operations of the Board's Church Loans Division, since all the expenses of this program of work are paid by interest collected on loans plus returns from limited investments of funds designated for the church loans operations.

Reserves of \$4 million may seem to be huge. When you consider, however, that the Board's operating costs exceed \$1 million per month it is questionable whether they are yet large enough. The Board provides full support for over 700 home missionaries and partial support for over 1,500 more; it undergirds this work through a supporting staff of 89 staff members and 115 office workers.

Southern Baptists believe so fully in what they are doing through their agencies that they want them to have enough financial reserves to weather some unforeseen storm and to continue extending the gospel of our Lord. They never again want their work brought practically to a standstill because of debt.

It is in this spirit that your Home Mission Board uses funds which you provide through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and seeks to maintain reasonable reserves.

The Home Mission Board, like other agencies, is dependent upon the continuing support of Southern Baptists. The needs and opportunities of today call for increasing support. Your 68 board members (directors), your administration and your staff pray, study, and plan carefully to determine ways by which the gifts of Southern Baptists, many of them sacrificial gifts, will do the most for the claiming of "Our Land for Christ." □

Happenings

The Horrors of War

The Baptist World Alliance relief committee has urged Baptists of the world to contribute \$100,000 to provide life-saving food, shelter, and clothing for refugee people in India and Bangladesh.

Theo Patnaik*, an India-born associate secretary of the international Baptist fellowship, made a personal visit to the

area where an estimated 10 million Bengalese refugees had fled into India during the civil war in former East Pakistan. Patnaik, a former Home Board employee, said approximately one million of these refugees are now returning to the new nation of Bangladesh, but they and the other nine million still in India are desperately in need of life-sustaining aid. Thousands are dying daily for the

lack of food and medical care, he said. "The horrors of war are hard to describe," Patnaik said. "I am haunted in the night by memories of what I saw in the refugee camps on the Indian side as well as my experiences in Bangladesh. I cannot understand man's own inhumanity to man. We just haven't learned to live and accept one another."

"I can still hear cries of women in the camps; the gathering of dead children for burial; the severed bodies of men and women alike; and the mass murders outside villages and sometimes in the middle of towns. This is not a Pakistani or Indian problem, but a human problem."

Reporting to alliance officials, Southern Baptist Patnaik said that the new nation of Bangladesh is the most densely populated area of the world, with 1,336 persons per square mile. War-disturbed people are living in sewer pipes and any other temporary shelter they can find available, he observed.

"For days I wept and pleaded with God for an open channel by which Baptists could have a part in helping humanity which is almost at a point of no return. I feel it deeply because they are my people, no matter on which side of the border. But as Christians we ought to hear the cries too."

"Christian love as redemptive channels expressed in social concern can open doors for the gospel," he said. "We can communicate in the language of the cross, for this is the only hope for peace and understanding in a confused, complex, war-stricken world."

Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the alliance, said the relief funds being sought will be dispensed by leaders of Baptist conventions in India and Bangladesh, by American, Canadian, Australian and British Baptist missions, and also through the Mennonite Central Committee which has established relief stations in the affected area. Five Baptist unions in India and two in Bangladesh hold membership in the Baptist World Alliance. Statistics show about 21,000 Baptists in Bangladesh's 75 million population, and 635,000 Baptists in India.

*Patnaik, indicated at Jordan Gate Baptist Seminary as a full-time missionary to international areas before joining the Baptist World Alliance in 1971.



Refugees in the war-stricken India and Bangladesh huddle over scarce bowls of food.



In a makeshift reed shelter, a refugee woman comforts a baby, already victim of malnutrition.

42 hm/april '72

A Message To Thoughtful Laymen



Would disability force your minister to resign?

Let's hope not. But let's also consider the results of a recent nationwide study of disability among ministers. Approximately 13% of one group of ministers indicated that they had to resign, or will have to resign, because of disability. Others reported that they did not continue to receive a salary from their churches after they were disabled, while still others said that their wives had to go to work. And in cases where a supply minister was hired, 7% of the disabled ministers indicated that they paid the supply minister out of their own salaries.

If your minister should encounter disability—temporary or permanent—could your church continue paying his salary? Who would pay for a supply minister? Could your minister and his family continue to live in church-provided housing, or wouldn't the budget stand the added strain?

To answer these questions, you and your church board may wish to consider the following possibilities: Check with the Social Security office to determine what benefits are available.

/Explore various welfare agencies which could provide financial aid to your clergyman's family.
/Review denomination-sponsored pension plans to see if they include disability income protection.
/Discuss with your minister what constitutes an "adequate" income protection program. (And make arrangements to increase the program if it's inadequate.)
/Come to an agreement as to who employs and pays the supply minister.
/Establish a regular review date so the program never becomes outdated.

Reprints of this public service message for distribution to your local church officials are available on request. Also available are reprints of an article in *Your Church* magazine on the subject of ministerial disability.



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hm/april '72 43

HAPPENINGS / CONTINUED

Chaplain's
Prayer Calendar

May 1: Charles B. Prewitt, Okla., Air Force; Malcome H. Roberts, Mo., Navy. May 2: William M. McGraw, Jr., Ala., Air Force; Harold W. Runnels, Tex., Army. May 4: Ralph A. Goff, Okla., Army; George E. Ormsbee, Mo., Army. May 5: Joseph H. Coggin, N.C., Air Force; A. J. Thiessen, Ore., hospital; Franklin LeRoy Dittmar, Okla., institutional; Edward F. Lovill, N.C., hospital. May 6: James L. Burck, Ky., institutional; James H. McKinney, Ga., Army. May 7: Clarence H. Roland, Ga., Army; Carl J. Pearson, Ark., Navy. May 9: John B. Hunter, Ark., hospital. May 10: James D. Bruns, Mo., Army; George R. McHorse, Tex., Navy; Stafford C. Rogers, La., hospital. May 12: William C.

Fuller, N.C., Navy. May 14: Donald H. Cabaniss, Ga., hospital; Richard M. Graham, Va., institutional; Jack Nanney, S.C., industrial. May 15: James E. Lockhart, Mo., hospital; Lawrence E. Saul, Miss., Air Force; Joseph E. Wilson, Ia., Army; Bradford L. Rizzo, Tex., Air Force. May 16: Clark O. Hitt, Tex., hospital. May 17: Jack R. Milligan, Tex., Army; J. T. Shipman, Tex., Navy. May 18: Jack Wendell Roberts, Fla., Navy. May 19: James F. Kirstein, N.C., Navy; Thomas M. Richardson, Ala., Army; William R. Swenson, Minn., Navy. May 20: James Alfred Stanford, N.C., Army; James R. Rigler, Mo., Navy; Harrell Rex Lewis, Tex., hospital; Daniel O. Davis, Jr., N.Y., Army. May 21: John David House, Ga., Navy. May 22: Walter E. Sanders, N.C., hospital; Lawrence E. Johnston, Colo., hospital. May 23: Bruce D. Anderson, N.Y., Army;

Joseph R. Frazier, N.Y., Navy; William A. Massey, Jr., Ia., institutional; Paschall, Ia., hospital; Harold D. White, Ark., Army; Felix J. Williams, La., hospital. May 24: Roy V. Thornberry, Jr., N.C., Navy. May 25: Stonewall Jackson, Jr., N.C., Navy. May 26: Mark W. Fairless, Tenn., Air Force; A. J. Clark, Miss., Army; James I. Juhon, Ga., Army. May 27: Delbert G. Payne, Tenn., Army; William E. Sloan, Ga., Army; Bennie H. Clayton, Ia., Air Force. May 28: Kevin L. Anderson, Tex., Navy; Hubert Garrell, N.C., Army; Joe F. Luck, Tex., hospital; Howard E. Waters, Tex., Navy. May 29: William H. Ellis, Tenn., Navy; Wm. Robert Massey, Ala., Navy. May 30: John L. Hall, Va., Navy. May 31: Carl Jefferson Hendrick, Jr., N.C., Army; Robert A. Long, N.C., Navy. □

Introducing



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Letters

Hidden Meaning

Our January issue dealt primarily with the news media definition of occult: powers not explained in ordinary scientific terms, e.g. fortune telling. . . . The original meaning of occult (mentioned briefly at the beginning) is simply "secretly hidden," a definition used for centuries by persons calling themselves occultists. They believe the one, infinite God has revealed himself differently to various finite cultures. Jesus, Buddha, Krishna are equal manifestations in the flesh of God, who is spirit.

One revelation is not superior to another, except as it best fits the needs of a particular culture. Occultists are those who have seen this "hidden" truth. They believe each of us is created in the image of God and must find him within. To seek him outside ourselves with beliefs, formulas and creeds is ignorance and idolatry.

You failed to distinguish between these two and occasionally lumped them together by implication—as in "LSD and Yogi." (Incidentally, a yogi is a person who practices yoga.)

Yoga is no more related to LSD than is Christianity. If an author studied the Jesus freaks, and wrote on "LSD and Christianity," one would say he was badly misinformed. It is this type of misinformation which I would like to counter. Yoga aims only at becoming one with God, through the Christ Consciousness, "the way, the truth, and the light" as expressed in different ways by Jesus, Buddha, Krishna and others.

I hope you better understand Eastern religions in the future, and not confuse them with various "weird" phenomena. David Stephens
Kansas City, Mo.

■ I have a suggestion to make to Mrs. L.C. Feldman, the 83-year-old woman who likes to sing (see "Letters," Dec. HM). Most older people do love to sing, but feel that they do not have nice voices anymore and so seldom join in with congregational singing—or perhaps they do not now or enjoy trying to sing the new songs.

I know of several people in a local rest home who so love to sing, but the younger people who come to visit and lead do not know "I Don't Have to Cross Jordan Alone," "When They Ring Those Golden Bells," "The Old Time Religion," etc. However when I gather two or three of

them together and we have a song fest they almost raise the roof!

It was a revelation to me that even those who have forgotten so much still remember the words and tune of "Amazing Grace" and "I Will Arise and Go To Jesus." I am some younger than 83 and often times I do not know the "old songs" they request, but I'll bet she would!

They also love to hear the "old time preaching"—so I urge Mrs. Feldman to gather up her friend and her hymnals with the old songs and visit some shut-ins or convalescent homes and help them make sweet music. Everyone will get a blessing.

Mrs. Dorothy Shellenberger
Waco, Texas

Editor's Note: Mrs. Shellenberger's letter was forwarded to Mrs. Feldman. We print it here because we feel her suggestion is a good one that can help many people in similar situations.

Excellent Error

Your January issue was an excellent job of reporting . . . however, I feel you gravely erred. A magazine that speaks in the name of a church that stands on the Bible . . . is far amiss in even suggesting that the occult can possibly be an ally of the church.

The occult is nothing for Christians to be objective about. The Bible condemns it and strictly forbids believers to indulge in it in any form.

A magazine such as HOME MISSIONS should have included in its coverage an evaluation of the occult in terms of biblical teaching. I hope you are planning a follow-up.

Robert Barnes
Wingate, N.C.

Editor's Note: Like you, we felt in our post-mortem examination of the magazine that it lacked an evaluative article to tie all loose ends together. We have contacted writers about such an article, and hope to have it in a summer issue.

■ I have taken HOME MISSIONS for many years. And I read with great interest your January issue on Witchcraft. I feel that it is most important that people be warned of this terrible deception. This is especially the duty of the churches. . . .

Andrew Olsen
Sequim, Wash.

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Contents

I Am Black Man	2
<i>The earth was created in six days but the seventh male men whole</i>	
Worship	6
<i>Out of the scandal of separation, a new tune is sung by Deering L. King</i>	
Sound and Soul and Song	9
Preaching	14
<i>From a heritage of "stolen" christianity, a pulpit that's free by Henry Mitchell</i>	
Music	17
<i>Out of the suffering of slavery comes the beauty of "soul" by Joseph Pyles</i>	
Outreach	20
<i>The black church had to get involved, or get lost by WJ Hodge</i>	
Never Enough Time	23
Theology	26
<i>Black power isn't the end, merely the means by John W. Fleming</i>	
Revolution	28
<i>Jesus is revolutionary and salvation is liberation by Olin Miss Jr</i>	
A Long Time A'Building	30
<i>Reuben Scott has come a long way in 11 years, yet he's not standing still</i>	
Black and White Together	34
<i>It's not too late to recognize the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man by Emmanuel McCall</i>	
Their Brother's Brother	37
Comment	40
<i>The Unfiltered Experience by Walker Knight</i>	
Executive's Word	41
<i>Rainy Day Reveries by Arthur B. Rutledge</i>	
Happenings	42
Letters	45

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Cover Story: Being a black preacher in his pulpit is man's closest time to being free; James Netters, a Memphis minister with a pocketful of soul, is among the freest. Story on page 9. Photos by Everett Hullum.

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Letters

Really With It?

As one who has felt that HOME MISSIONS was really with it in the past few years, I was beginning to be very disappointed with the issue on the occult, especially the horrible cover picture. But when I read Kent Philpott and "Lying Spirits and Teachings of Demons" I thought, "that saves the issue." I was especially disappointed with the unanswered questions of Jim Newton.

I suggest to your writers and readers that they carefully, prayerfully, and with an open mind read Dr. Merrill Unger's books, *Biblical Demonology* and the more recent *Demons in the World Today*....

Carlton L. Myers
Salem, Va.

Too Smart?

(Jan. HM) is a dangerous publication you have put on the coffee table of many dear Christian people who believe (literally) what they read in any Southern Baptist publication; they are not able to understand satire, tongue-in-cheek statements and innuendoes. May God protect them from over-intelligent people like you and your staff.

Dorothy Hunt
Carson, Calif.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

Your January (issue) ... is a grand piece of promotion for spiritualism and all the other forms of demonic activity which are experiencing a revival today. The total impact of the discussions, from the complimentary references to Bishop Pike to the vapory, nebulous conclusion of the editor himself, is to call Christians to utilize these unseen powers in the service of Christ.

The whole course of Scripture is opposed to such a policy of peaceful co-existence with Satan. Paul advised the Ephesians to "stand against the wiles of the devil." To my knowledge there is not a single instance in the Bible where believers are told to engage in cooperative activities with the demonic powers. Jesus himself who is generally regarded as an authority in this particular field said in John 14:30: The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.

The conclusion reached by Jim Newton (page 30) and by Miss Annette Wilkinson (page 34) are examples of the proverbial

"wolf in sheep's clothing." If the ers either know or believe the B. references to demons and the who of it.

The interview with Kent Philpott is a redeeming feature of the whole group of articles. The factual reporting of the various examples and instances of demonic activity is commendable, but the utter lack of any effort to go to the Scriptures a chance to speak is disappointing indeed. Readers are left with their confusion and their search for truth unanswered.

Subscribers to HOME MISSIONS deserve better than this. Many young people and others who are under pressure from those who represent the occult powers deserve the unequivocal teaching of the Scriptures. Double talk in a Christian magazine is intolerable.

R.W. Prevost
Ooltewah, Tenn.

... This information is long past due. The churches have tried to keep quiet on the supernatural too long. Sure, all these things work—they are of the devil and he certainly is our adversary. But just as Moses' rod thrown to the ground devoured all the rods thrown to the ground by the wizards of Egypt, so has God given to men, through his Holy Spirit, power tools to combat every trick of the devil....

Alyene Arnold

Wichita Falls, Tex.

• Congratulations upon the superb issue I could hardly put it down once I began reading. Your staff has done a commendable job on the occult. I work with college students on a small, coed, Baptist college campus. Even though we do not experience problems of the occult, I want our students to be aware of what's happening across our nation....

Clarence H. Davis
Bluefield, Va.

• I very much enjoyed reading your issue covering the occult, particularly the article on "Lying Spirits and Teachings of Demons." I was asked to resign a Southern Baptist church because G. P. had thrust me into the knowledge gained by Mr. Philpott. It has been my privilege to pray for the deliverance of many demon-possessed or "demonized" persons. Among these are a young man who had visited a number of psychiatrists and gained no relief; an epileptic having a dozen seizures a day; a young woman

about to be committed to a mental institution. A number of people I have prayed with had unwittingly opened themselves to the invasion of evil spirits by seeking to obtain "more of the Holy Spirit."

Ted G. Breitz
Romeoville, Ill.

• May I compliment you on your thorough and penetrating treatment of the occult.... Thank you for taking so seriously what I, and many other Christians, regard as the greatest danger facing the United States today: the growing fascination with the occult and psychic phenomena....

Mrs. Robert M. Krause
Huntsville, Ala.

Cool & Heavy

... For the life of me I don't know how any one can criticize this magazine. We are a Jesus People church with hundreds of long hair kids that really love Jesus. I have learned a lot from these new Christians. I am 45 years old and a Southern Baptist college graduate and I have had to let God bend me some and I am glad.

What I'm trying to say is your magazine is really great. It's cool and it's heavy and right on.... The issue on the occult is very good. We have former Satan worshippers, witches, etc., in our church and they would agree also that the church in general needs to be informed about all the types of Satanic activity.

Another deacon and I led a young couple to Jesus. They were fringe hippies. They said they were happy for days and then someone brought a ouija board to them. They said from that day on they lost their joy. We prayed over them in Jesus' name and left. They have since come to our church and walked the aisle confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord....

Lum Setser
Phoenix, Ariz.

I'm sure the issue ... dealing with the occult is going to draw a lot of startled criticism from that segment of Southern Baptists who are still holed up in the local church program and unaware of what is happening out in the world.

The young people of this generation are searching everywhere for the truth, and some of them have stumbled into the dark paths of magic and witchcraft.

The church has no power but the power of Christ in this battle against

"principalities and powers," and we had better be sure of our weapons before we set out to the battle....

You and your staff handled this difficult subject with courage and objectivity.... The information ... is authoritative and timely. The warnings are well-taken....

Marte Johnson
Hawthorne, Calif.

• ... I want to thank you for your fine efforts in editing HOME MISSIONS. It can be matched by no other popular religious periodical.

Garry Oliver
Lexington, Ky.

• ... I am thrilled with (Jan.) HOME MISSIONS. Thanks for printing material so helpful in an age like ours. May God guide you as you publish for him.

James B. Hensley
Orlando, Fla.

• ... Many times, when I have been depressed over the apparent sluggishness and narrow-mindedness that is sometimes displayed in our Convention, I pick up HOME MISSIONS and find between its covers a progressive denomination that is willing to try new ideas and methods in presenting the good news of Jesus Christ.

H. Banks
Bolivar, Mo.

• Your January issue ... is another outstanding presentation of a contemporary issue that many of us appreciate. We need this kind of presentation because we know that it is making a strong appeal to both youth and adults but we don't have enough information to really be knowledgeable on the subject. You have presented enough information to help us understand something of the nature of it.

Phillip E. Rodgersson
Richmond, Va.

• ... Your staff is to be commended on the fine work they are doing. I appreciate the various problems as they are, and not as hypothetical situations.

I can't help but notice the criticism is aimed at the open-minded way in which you handle the various subjects. Drug abuse, culture and moral issues are real and our people need to be informed with the bare facts. I think we are many times

guilty of trying to shield our people from these various issues that exist. If we as Christians are not aware of the problems how can we minister to people in their need?

Many times in our church we devote the prayer meeting hour, or the church training hour to the study and discussion of the various issues covered in your magazine. We feel that the more we are aware of, the better equipped we are to cope with the problems that arise....

George Bosarge
McLaurin, Miss.

• I am interested in reading (Jan. HM) because we realize the very real danger people face when they open themselves to the occult. It's just like opening the door of your spirit and letting Satan step in. But people laugh, and they don't believe how serious it can be....

Mrs. Nana B. Schulz
Harley, Tex.

• The January issue ... is excellent. It should be kept by all as reference material.

Bela Udvarnoki
Murfreesboro, N.C.

Jars Me Loose

Would you believe I've been subscribing to HOME MISSIONS for umpteen years and your April and May issues grabbed my 25-year-old married daughter working with teenagers in First Baptist Church of Bellevue, Neb.? Then I gave her the issue on the Jesus Movement and several others.... I think you're doing a great job of telling it like it is! Well written! It communicates! It jars me loose from my moorings and there is much that I consider more "social relations" than Christian. But, if Bible-based Christians can depend on Trueblood's and Chalin's, we'll balance the swing of the pendulum—God willing....

Mrs. Kay Deas
Homer, La.

OOPS! We seemed to have made an error last month (March HOME MISSIONS) in a outline on page 10. Pat Wycoff, a bus captain at Graceland Baptist Church, is pictured on page 11, far right, not page 10. The photograph on page 10 is of a family of regular Graceland attenders.

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