

ORDINARY PEOPLE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF A
BLACK BAPTIST CONGREGATION'S FAITHFUL
PERFORMANCE OF RELIGION

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

December, 2008

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

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To my wife

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the continuing support of Pastor Enoch Fuzz and the entire Corinthian Baptist Church congregation. I am particularly grateful to the individuals who sat with me for formal interviews and those who shared their thoughts and experiences in less formal settings. Mattie Shannon, Vanessa Croney, Harmon Stockdale, and Pastor Fuzz were particularly generous with their time. I am pleased to be able to bring their insights to a wider audience. Others, particularly Sister Mary Ridley Black, Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff, Deacon David Majors, Sr., Deacon Benjamin Flagg, Rev. Gleason Rogers, and Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr. made significant contributions to this text through their service to the church. I offer my appreciation and sincere admiration to Corinthian's pastor, associate ministers, deacons, mothers, trustees, and musicians. I thank the students who participated in Corinthian's Summer Academy and the many church members who supported the project. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my fellow ushers, particularly my colleagues on the Senior Ushers Board. I thank the church as a whole for the "Amens," the kind words, and the sincere prayers that have encouraged me and aided me in this process. I do not take you for granted.

I am also grateful to my academic colleagues at Vanderbilt University and elsewhere. I appreciate the generous collegiality of faculty members and graduate students in the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture's (CSRC) Music, Religion, and the South working group. The CSRC's Religion and Politics group provided financial support for some of my early field research in North Nashville. Vanderbilt's Center for Ethics contributed significantly to my completion of the dissertation by funding and convening dissertation writers' groups. My colleagues in these groups offered invaluable feedback and encouragement during and after the formal sessions. The members of my dissertation committee extended me the courtesy of careful readings and constructive feedback, often during times when personal or professional obligations would have entitled them to let a graduate student's dissertation sit half-read. I am grateful to Prof. Brad Braxton, Prof. Dennis Dickerson, and Prof. Thomas Gregor for their generous service as readers. Their courtesy improved this document. Prof. Jeff Titon offered helpful suggestions for background sources and also shared some of his experiences with interviewing pastors and presenting personal narratives to readers. For these personal kindnesses and for his

contributions to the literature that structured my efforts to know Corinthian, I am grateful. I thank my advisor, Prof. Gregory Barz, who expected brilliance and called attention to both its presence and its absence in thousands of pages of draft material. The errors of judgment and execution that remain in this document are mine, but the benefits of his feedback and that of other generous readers are apparent to me on every page.

Corinthian teaches people to be grateful each morning for the simple privilege of waking into a new day, to acknowledge that we do not have absolute power to sustain our own lives. I woke every day with the means and opportunity to engage this project. I woke to days that were filled with support from my family and my friends. Most especially I thank my wife, the Reverend Kim Sheehan. She contributed to every step of this research, as a minister at Corinthian, as a careful critic of my writing, and as a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. I acknowledge her. I do not take her for granted.

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NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTIONS

The transcriptions in this dissertation vary slightly according to the type of recording that they accompany. I group the transcriptions into two general categories: public and private performances. The private performances include interviews in which Corinthian's members and Pastor Fuzz spoke extemporaneously and for which my microphone and I constituted the entirety of the immediate audience. I take greater liberties as an editor of these private performances than I do with the public performances. As a partner in these conversations, my nods, smiles, and other gestures of agreement, understanding, or confusion undoubtedly shaped the exchange significantly. In these instances punctuation offers clarity and faithfully communicates both the words that my conversation partners spoke and the meanings that I ascribed to them. The public performances – including preaching, prayer, singing and commentary during worship services – were already directed toward a broad audience when they occurred. I was one of a multitude of collaborators and audience members; even my microphone was generally one of many recording devices. I treat these transcriptions with a lighter hand – notating words and pauses without intentionally collapsing the extemporal syntax of the spoken word into the extra-temporal syntax of the written word. The congregation provides punctuation and context clues for a careful listener through their collaborative performance, and I routinely transcribe the text and substance of these contributions when possible.

With some exceptions, my transcriptions conform to the following general principles:

Text transcribed from field recordings is always presented in its own sans-serif font to make it immediately distinguishable from written sources. This treatment contextualizes the use of a stylized diction as evidence of mastery of a certain mode of discourse rather than a deviation from the standards of academic writing: **God wanna use ordinary folk.**

Punctuation is generally limited to periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and hyphens.

With few exceptions, I tend to capitalize only the first letter of statements and the word, "I." I generally capitalize references to God in keeping with community standards.

Words uttered by someone other than the lead performer are bracketed and marked with a dark grey highlight: **[Alright]**

Words or phrases (typically of a song) performed simultaneously by a leader and supporting performers are marked with a light grey highlight: *[I gotta tell him]*

Spoken words are printed in **regular type**. Sung words are *italicized*.

Descriptions of non-verbal performances (laughter, shouting, etc.) are surrounded by square brackets and asterisks: **[*Laughter*]**

CHAPTER I

INVITATION

You begin reading, habitually ignoring the sounds around you. Turning to the first chapter, you find it beginning with an audio clip and a transcription. You make the right choice, queuing up the selected track, and Sister Mattie Shannon's voice transports you to a Wednesday night church service in North Nashville. At first the applause and shouts of the others get in the way. You struggle to hear through them, relieved when they melt into a more orderly accompaniment to Sister Mattie's lead.

**Recorded Example 1 – “Every Year Has a Number (Somebody's Gone)”
Sister Mattie Shannon (7 February 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee**

Sister Mattie Shannon: Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here last year.

Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Every year has a number. Somebody's gone.

Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here last year.

I miss my loving mother. Somebody's gone.

I miss my loving mother. Somebody's gone.

I miss my loving mother. Somebody's gone.

Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here last year.

Then as sink into the sounds you begin to wonder about these other voices. They begin to add their own lines, and Sister Mattie's steady, mournful lead runs dark and warm like rich soil, sometimes obscured by the organic outbursts of memory and ecstasy that it nourishes.

Recorded Example 1 (cont.)

MS: *I miss my loving father.* **Pastor Enoch Fuzz:** [*Stomping*] **Deacon David Majors:** *Ahhh
Somebody's gone.* **EF:** *Somebody's gone. Ohhh*

MS (cont.): *I miss my loving father.*
Somebody's gone. **EF:** miss my _ *Ohhh*
I miss my loving father. **EF:** *Ohhh*
Somebody's gone. **EF:** *Ohhh* **DM:** *Well*
Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone
that was here last year **EF:** *Ohhh*
Every year has a number. **EF:** *Oh yeah!*
Somebody's gone. **EF:** *Whoa yeah.*
Every year has a number.
Somebody's gone. **?:** *Ohhh*
Every year has a number. **EF:** [*Clapping*]
Somebody's gone. **DM:** *Ohhh*
Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here
last year. **EF:** [*Clapping*]
EF: *Ohhh _ Oh yeah*
DM: Yes he is.

Every year has a number.
Somebody's gone. **Sister Patsy Hereford:** [*Shouting*]
Every year has a number.
Somebody's gone. **?:** *Oh yeah*
Every year has a number.
Somebody's gone. **Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff:** Thank you, Lord. **DM:** *Ohhh*
Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here
last year. **EF:** *Ohhh*
NW: *Mattie*

Every year has a number.
Somebody's gone. **NW:** Lord, have mercy!
Every year has a number. **EF:** *Somebody's _ Ohhh*
Somebody's gone. **PH:** [*Shouting*] **CW:** Yes.
Every year has a number. **EF:** *Somebody's*
Somebody's gone.
Ohhhhh... Somebody's gone that was here
last year. **EF:** *Ohhh*
PH: [*Shouting*]
EF: Amen
?: Amen
NW: Alright.
PH: [*Shouting*]
PH: [*Shouting*]
PH: [*Sigh*]
Reverend Jackie Baugh: Amen.
NW: . . . wonderful.
Congregation: [*Clapping*]
NW: [*Laughing*]
JB: Hallelujah

As the intensely emotional soundscape of this Wednesday night in this church releases you, you return to the sounds of your own time and place wondering about the people you heard. Is there someone else?



Figure 1: Sister Mattie Shannon at a Wednesday night Praise and Worship Service

Ordinary People

The richness of the Black pulpit tradition is inextricably bound up with this oft overlooked resource, the congregation, without whom the sermon event would be impossible.

Henry H. Mitchell (1990: 112-13)

Ordinary People who let the mighty extraordinary power of the Lord come into your life – you’ll find God using ordinary folk to do extra-ordinary things. And you just an ordinary person. God wanna use ordinary folk.

Pastor Enoch E. Fuzz (“Ordinary People” 5 August 2007)

This text focuses on the “ordinary” people who collectively constitute Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, a community of faith that their pastor calls, “a plain old church.”



Figure 2: Corinthian Baptist Church

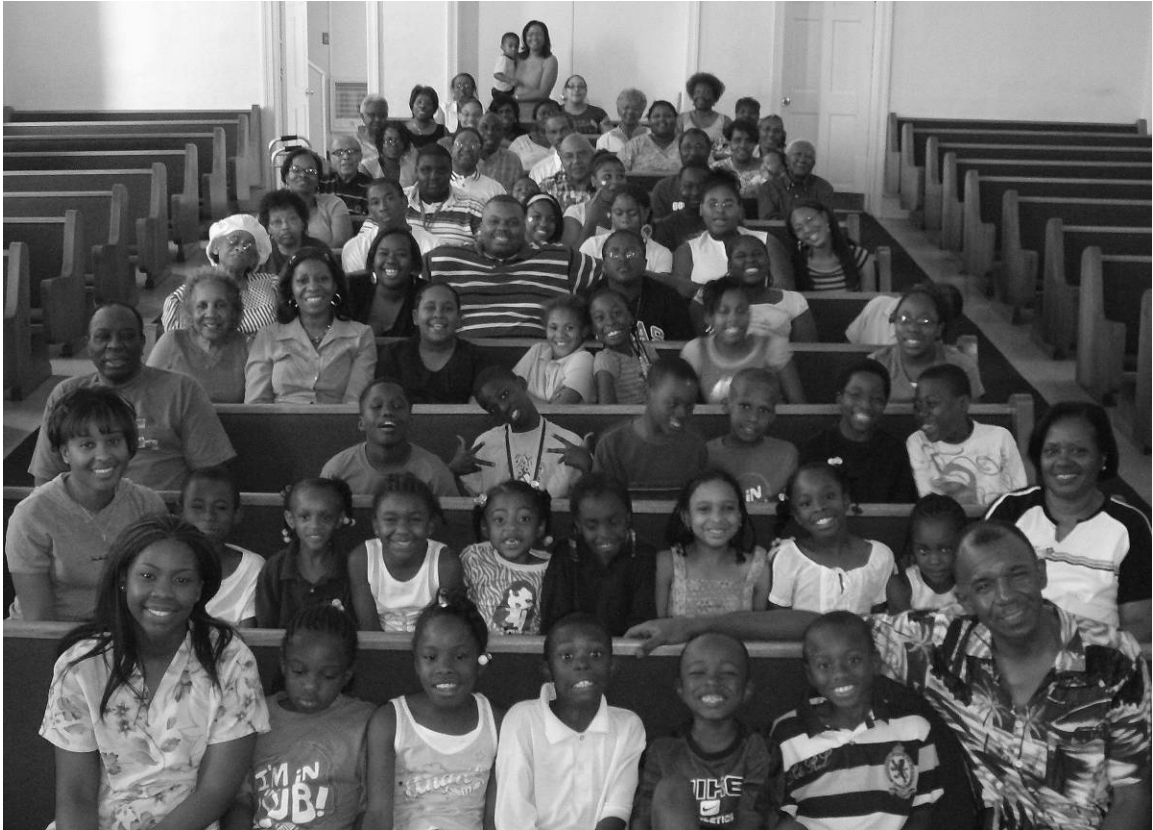


Figure 3: Group photo from Vacation Bible School 2008



Figure 4: "Fellowship while I'm here"

This plain old church and its ordinary people are located in North Nashville, an area of predominantly African American neighborhoods clustered around Jefferson Street. Prior to the 1960s, Jefferson Street was a cultural and economic center for Nashville's African American communities. After the demise of legislated segregation, North Nashville's economy declined. Many financially successful residents relocated to communities surrounding Nashville, taking their financial and intellectual resources with them. Interstate 40 cut through North Nashville in the 1960s, severing its main artery, Jefferson Street, and making North Nashville a less accessible commercial destination just as integration opened other areas to receive Black customers.

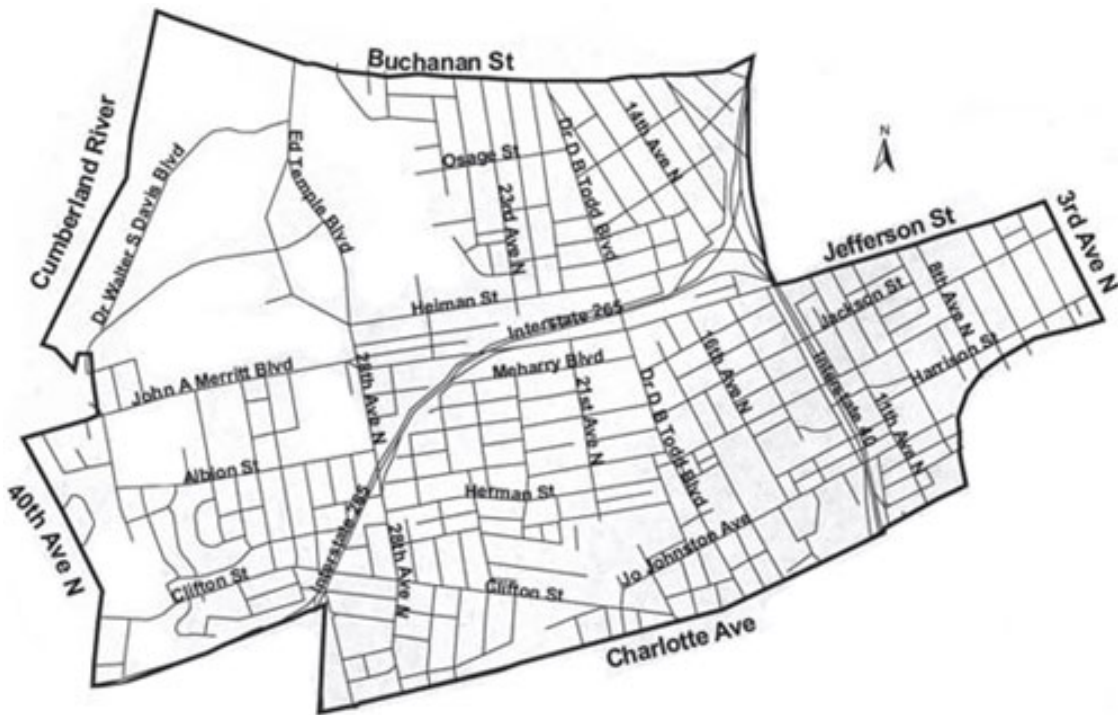


Figure 5: Map of North Nashville from the North Nashville Community Development Corporation.

Decades later, North Nashville is a center of economic and educational poverty. Nashville is slightly under US averages for income and poverty rates, but North Nashville lags far behind the rest of the city. The 2000 census data on one North Nashville zip code shows a median household income of less than half of the US average. Roughly a third of families live below the official poverty level as compared to less than a tenth of the general US population. While Nashville's educational statistics in 2000 were slightly higher than

national averages, North Nashville residents were only about half as likely to hold a college degree. Only about three out of five residents over the age of 25 possessed a high school diploma, while four of five reported high school diplomas in Nashville and the nation.

Roughly 95% of North Nashville's residents are African American, and the high rates of poverty and low rates of education are even more striking in comparison to the extraordinary wealth concentrated just a half-dozen miles southwest of Jefferson Street. A ten-minute drive away from Corinthian could take you to the City of Belle Meade. This exclusive, 99% white city within Nashville ranked in the top five wealthiest communities in America based on the same census data. Belle Meade boasts average income figures roughly 10 times greater than those of North Nashville. 1,977 of 1,977 Belle Meade residents over the age of 25 graduated from high school, and they are three times more likely to have completed college than someone living in North Nashville.

North Nashville is a testament to America's continued practice of de facto segregation and racially-significant patterns of economic and educational disparity, but it also encompasses several landmarks of African American history. It is home to Hadley Park, a neighborhood park within walking distance of the church that was the first municipal park in America designated for use by African Americans. It was created in 1907 from land that was previously a part of Tennessee State University, a Historically Black University that anchors North Nashville and drew several of Corinthian's elder leaders to Nashville from Memphis and elsewhere. Fisk University, another Historically Black University down Jefferson Street from Hadley and TSU, is home to the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the choir that earned Nashville its nickname, "Music City." Fisk was also, for a time, the home of W.E.B Du Bois, one of the most significant and influential scholars of the late-19th and early-20th centuries and a leading figure in the development of first the Niagara Movement and later the NAACP. Du Bois's lingering presence around Jefferson Street feels particularly significant for this text since the features he used to describe "slave religion" still function as important concepts in the study of African American worship traditions.



Figure 6: Fisk University's Jubilee Hall visible from the roof of Corinthian

Theories of African American Religiosity: Du Bois to Mitchell

The theoretical framework of my research comes from the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Henry H. Mitchell. Du Bois's work as a sociologist and public intellectual established a place for him among the best known and most influential American scholars of the 20th century. His most famous publication, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), framed much of the discourse about race in America, Black culture, and African American religious traditions among other topics and continues to serve as a cornerstone for academic and popular constructions of the Black Church. In combination with his concepts of the Veil and Double-Consciousness, the following proclamation from *The Souls of Black Folk* stands as one of Du Bois's most enduring academic contributions:

Those who have not thus witnessed the frenzy of a Negro revival in the untouched backwoods of the South can but dimly realize the religious feeling of the slave; as described, such scenes appear grotesque and funny, but as seen they are awful. Three things characterized this religion of the slave, – the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy. (1903: 120)

Du Bois identified “the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy” as the core elements of slave religion over a century ago, and they persist as core concepts in the academic study of African American religiosity today. Beyond the academy, these elements appear in popular

culture with surprising regularity in variations ranging from three-dimensional authenticity to deliberate or accidental distortions and caricatures.

The black preacher has become a stock character of American politics and popular culture with variants that include true believers, unscrupulous opportunists, and political mavericks among other archetypes, each representing readily recognizable traits of Du Bois's charismatic leader in contexts of modern American society. African American music has conquered the world through its influence on American popular culture, carrying with it the influence and imprint of Black church musicality. The principle agents of music in the Black church: the choirs, the singing preachers, the spectacular soloists, and the give and take of call and response, are a part of America's basic cultural vocabulary. The frenzy remains the most mysterious of the three, but it is communicated by the intensity of the music and the preacher. The frenzy of shouting and possession by the spirit are known outside of scholarly circles by people who have never seen it in context, although they may be less closely associated with main line Protestant worship than the preacher and the music in popular culture.

The preacher, the music and the frenzy also dominate academic understandings of African American religion and culture. Du Bois and his model of African American religiosity are woven throughout a century of scholarship (see for example, Mays and Nichols 1933, Mays 1938, Herskovitz 1941, Frazier 1964, Levine 1977, Raboteau 1978, Creel 1988, Holloway 1990, Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, Abrahams 1992, Higginbotham 1993, Taylor 1994, Wilmore 1998, Raboteau 2001, Taylor 2002, Raboteau 2004, Mitchell 2004, Blum 2007, Evans 2008). Indeed, after being in publication and at the center of academic inquiry into those traditions for over a century, Du Bois's three characteristics may well have become *more* strikingly important to the function and identity of the Black church than they were when Du Bois first described "the religious feeling of the slave."

The implicit and explicit influence of Du Bois and his work on the scholarship engaging African American religious traditions does not imply that his are the only relevant features or that they represent a wholly adequate description of a static religious culture in an unchanging nation. Du Bois's text and his typologies described products and processes of the racially charged tensions of a nation grappling with its unequal and incomplete applications of its self-proclaimed doctrines of liberty and equality. In doing so, they became active participants in those contests of ideas. Du Bois's use of the term "slave religion" to

describe the dynamics of a late-18th century Tennessee revival link the Black Church conceptually, historically and otherwise to the peculiar pressures of American slavery. Du Bois offers a call for change in commending the problem of “the color line” to the 20th century, and his call invited ongoing critique of his categories as legalized slavery passed from memory into history and the various institutions and traditions of the Black Church replaced slave religion.

Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nichols engaged in just this sort of critical engagement with Du Bois’s typologies in the 1930s, following Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* and *The Negro Church* (1903) with their own assessment of the institution in *The Negro’s Church* (1933) and Mays’s *The Negro’s God as Reflected in his Literature* (1938). In *W. E. B. Du Bois, American Prophet* (2007), Edward J. Blum opens his exposition of the significance of Du Bois’s religiosity in part through reference to letters from a book club member in the early 1900s who connect *The Souls of Black Folk* to the *Book of Psalms*. If Du Bois was writing a pseudo-scripture, then Mays, Nichols, and their colleagues offer a chorus of critical commentary. Mays and Nichols dig deeper into the institutions of the Black Church and balance Du Bois’s dramatic, almost poetic introduction of African American religiosity as he experienced it with critical, clever prose grounded in quantitative research in 791 churches across the country. They raise concerns about the institution and balance Du Bois’s celebration of the preacher with their own concerns about the education of preachers in the 1930s. They celebrate “the genius of the Negro church” in a chapter that has been republished in anthologies of Black Church scholarship, but they do so in response to their earlier criticisms of the institution. In addition to raising concerns about ministers’ education, they raise questions about the possibility of “overchurching,” asking whether the large number of churches dilutes the effectiveness of the community and overtaxes limited resources (financial and otherwise) in support of redundant bureaucracies and facilities.

Despite critical refinement and a century of historical development, Du Bois’s text remains the first word on the Black Church. *The Souls of Black Folk* appears on high school reading lists and college syllabi; it is readily available in book stores and online. Its engaging literary style makes it accessible despite its idiosyncrasies. Mays is harder to find. The complete text of *The Negro’s Church* is currently unavailable for purchase except by collectors. Its final chapter, “The Genius of the Negro Church,” is available in Milton Sernett’s *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (1999), but the rest – the chapters that

challenge and complicate Du Bois's typologies most convincingly – belong to libraries. Unfortunately, this makes Du Bois the last word that many readers encounter as well.

Mays and Nichols were not the last scholars to find genius in the Black Church. The scholarship of Henry H. Mitchell, himself something of a scholarly version of Du Bois's Black preacher who grew into a distinguished academic presence, are at the core of an academic, theological, and cultural reframing of the Blackness of the Black Church. Mitchell and others like him reflect a partial response to Mays and Nichols's critique of the declining educational credentials of the Black Church ministers of the 1930s. In contrast to the assumptions of African and African American inferiority that invited a remaking of Black faith practices in accordance with the aesthetics of majority, White worship, Mitchell reassesses and re-presents Black religiosity with fresh eyes and ears, revealing beauty and substance in the practices that earlier approaches struggled to conceal or justify. Through texts like *Black Preaching: the Recovery of a Powerful Art* (1970/1990) and *Black Church Beginnings* (2004), Mitchell participates in a conceptual renovation of the Black Church, pulling back earlier efforts to grasp at respectability to reveal a deep, rich foundation of faith like hand-finished hardwood floors hidden beneath mass-produced synthetic shag carpets. Mitchell's work reaffirms Du Bois's claim that "Negro blood has a message for the world" (1903: 11) by articulating the remarkable qualities of the Black Church and introducing a community of faith as partner to Du Bois's Preacher – the Congregation. His more recent work helps to reframe the default approach to African American religious culture drawing on the decades of scholarship that Du Bois sparked and his own long experience as a preacher and as an educator of preachers.

Almost a century after Du Bois described the preacher, the music, and the frenzy, Mitchell made the following observation while writing for a scholarly audience of homileticians and students of preaching:

From a preacher's point of view, the Black congregation with its contagious response is the best group in the world to whom to preach the gospel. The dialogue is freeing and affirming to the preacher. Not only is it easier to preach in the midst of authentic dialogue; but also the quality of preaching increases. ... The richness of the Black pulpit tradition is inextricably bound up with this oft overlooked resource, the congregation, without whom the sermon event would be impossible. (1990: 112-13)

Taking Mitchell at his word, we find the congregation to be an indispensable partner in the sermon, one that functions not simply as a receptacle for the preacher's utterances but as a

full participant in a ritualized conversation. In the preaching of sermons, we find a soloist supported by a full-voiced ensemble in a sacred session of collective improvisation. When we consider Du Bois's expanded description of the preacher as, "a leader a politician, an orator, a 'boss,' an intriguer, an idealist...and ever too, the centre of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number," we find a preacher whose identity is at every point defined by relationships with a congregation.



Figure 7: Corinthian's congregation in dialogue with a preacher



Figure 8: Corinthian's congregation at Vacation Bible School 2006

As an ethnomusicologist considering the musicality of the Black pulpit tradition, particularly the preachers' fluid transitions between speech, chant, and song and the call and collective improvisation of call and response between pulpit and pews, I was intrigued to find a homiletician commenting on the importance of congregational presence and performance in the sermon. I was surprised, however, to find that Mitchell's brief celebration of the congregation as an "oft overlooked" but indispensable resource represented some of the most in depth scholarly material on the importance of the congregation for what he calls, "the sermon event." It seems that, no matter how carefully and conscientiously preachers tend to their congregations in their pastoral role, when they engage in scholarship, they focus their attention on the pulpit just as their congregations do. This makes sense given the audience and motivation of homileticians. Typically their scholarship is directed toward providing instruction in or analysis of techniques and styles of preaching, so they attend to the techniques and stylistics of great and not-so-great preachers. Seminaries do not offer courses on being active congregants, and there is a reason that the premier journal on the topic of African American preaching, *The African American Pulpit*, does not take its name from the African American pew.

Even with only a few sentences of explanation, Mitchell's identification of the Black congregation as a crucial partner of the Black preacher in the sermon begs the question that guides this dissertation: If the rich tradition of the Black preacher's preaching is "inextricably bound up with [the congregation]," then how much else depends on this overlooked and understudied institution? Without the congregation, the preacher cannot preach. Without a congregation to follow him, Du Bois's preacher cannot lead. Without a congregation, there is no preacher. And if there can be no preacher without a congregation, then what about the music and the frenzy? Who will make the music and whom will the music move apart from the congregation? How can the crescendo of call and response occur without the voices of the congregation, and where will the frenzy manifest if not in their bodies and minds? The ordinary people of the congregation are the fourth member of the quartet, the group that has performed their roles without meaningful recognition for a century since the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Through this ethnography, I call attention to these extraordinary ordinary church folk: the people whose support and love for their pastors enabled the celebrated heroes of the Civil Rights Movement and made the Black pulpit a place of distinction; the anonymous men and women whose memories and voices carry echoes of Du Bois's sorrow songs into a new century; and the shaking, shouting, weeping bodies whose surrender to the spirit in worship reveals the presence and agency of a God who hears and answers prayer. This text explores Du Bois's preacher, music, and frenzy in relationship with Mitchell's Congregation. It grounds this twenty-first century reconsideration of the souls of Black folk in ethnographic field research at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church. Throughout this text, I endeavor to *not* overlook the so-called "ordinary" people whose devoted performance of their various roles as members of the Black Church continue to enrich and sustain the lives of millions of Americans through ordinary and extraordinary struggles. The remainder of this chapter addresses the theories and methods that inform my examination of the performance of religion at Corinthian. The three chapters that follow this one explore the preacher, the music, and the frenzy in relation to Corinthian's congregation in an effort to better understand some of the depth and breadth and complexity of religious life that is too often obscured by monolithic notions of "the Preacher," "the Music," "the Frenzy," and even "the Black Church."

Approaching an Ethnomusicology of Religion in the Heart of Music City

Du Bois introduces each of his collected essays in *The Souls of Black Folk* with verses of poetry paired with brief melodic notations. The texts come primarily from white, European authors. The simple representations of melodies come from examples of African American music that Du Bois calls “the sorrow songs” and others typically refer to as spirituals. His print media does not permit him to include the “plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences” that he celebrates elsewhere, but Du Bois clearly acknowledges music as a possible vector for bridging disparate personal experiences and cultural contexts. Du Bois clarifies and romanticizes his use of these brief preludes in his essay, “Of the Sorrow Songs”:

They that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days – Sorrow Songs – for they were weary at heart. And so before each thought that I have written in this book I have set a phrase, a haunting echo of the weird old songs in which the soul of the black slave spoke to men. Ever since I was a child these songs have stirred me strangely. They came out of the South unknown to me, one by one, and yet at once I knew them as of me and of mine. Then in after years when I came to Nashville I saw the great temple builded of these songs towering over the pale city. To me Jubilee Hall seemed ever made of the songs themselves, and its bricks were red with the blood and dust of toil. Out of them rose for me morning, noon, and night, bursts of wonderful melody, full of the voices of my brothers and sisters, full of the voices of the past (177-78 – orig.).

Du Bois pulls from two worlds of expressive literature to frame his essays, suggesting a faith that these two traditions – one oral, the other written; one born of labor, the other of leisure – might combine to express something that neither could accomplish alone. The binocular approach implied by these pairings is made explicit elsewhere in Du Bois’s writing. Along with the preacher, the music, and the frenzy, one of Du Bois’s best-known contributions to academic and popular understandings of African American culture is his veil - the metaphoric blinder that obscures Black America from White America, producing in African Americans a double consciousness. His three features of religion structure my chapters, but as I reread his descriptions of North Nashville and compare them with my own experiences, the veil becomes increasingly important.

When Du Bois writes about the sorrow songs, he describes a connection that reaches back to his childhood memories when he encountered those “weird old songs” that he recognizes as being “of [him] and [his] people.” He writes about an almost mystical experience of Jubilee Hall when he arrived at Fisk University. Du Bois’s description is

sensual, full of lament and deep admiration, as he attempts to explain his connection to cultural ancestors through their songs and the red bricks of a building built by songs which were, in turn, formed out of the “blood and dust of toil” in a slavery still within reach of living memory(*ibid.*). I began this musical ethnography of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, a sanctuary of the old songs situated barely a mile from Jubilee Hall, with a 21st-Century rendition of a sorrow song because I agree with Du Bois. Du Bois pairs dry transcriptions of echoes that stirred his heart with fragments of poetry that must have also stirred something in him. He pairs shards of an oral culture that claimed him by blood and toil and voice with literary evidence of a soul in the culture that spilled the blood and profited from the toil that wearied the hearts and bodes of the voices that sang those songs. The music – even more so in an age of digital recording and playback than in Du Bois’s time – has the power to stir us strangely. Du Bois testifies to the power of music to connect him with the past, and I find that it has a similar power to connect people separated by other barriers. Sound crosses boundaries that are impermeable to light. It transgresses, violating taboos of vision-based cultures that understand the world through contrasts of colors: black and white. It offers an opportunity to listen through the veil and to hear things that we cannot see. Each musico-literary preface testifies to Du Bois’s double-consciousness and invites readers to adopt a similar perspective.

Ethnographers aspire to an admittedly privileged and optional version of the double-consciousness that Du Bois describes. For most ethnographers, gaining access to cultures in which they become tolerated (or even welcome) alien presences is one of the more appealing aspects of the work. The ethnographer’s double consciousness is one of choice rather than necessity, but it suggests interesting parallels to Du Bois’s particular perspective as an African American scholar par excellence who chose to go into the South.

Du Bois is celebrated in Nashville, especially at Fisk where he completed his first round of undergraduate education, but he came to the South out of Massachusetts. While he describes an immediate identification with the music of his less urbane, Southern compatriots, he also carries turn of the 20th century assumptions about Southerners, rural people, and African Americans that mark them as simple, unsophisticated, and not quite civilized. Most of what Du Bois shares in common with the rural southern African American worshipers who he describes comes from their shared experience behind the veil

and the menu of experiences offered to people with dark skin in an America that treated race as a singularly significant marker of human value.

In the context of a small Baptist church in the heart of Tennessee in 1903, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois would arguably have been the least ordinary person imaginable. Du Bois was a remarkable figure even among the talented tenth of the talented tenth. He was the first African American to earn a Ph.D from Harvard, an extraordinary academic and activist, and one of America's first and still most influential theoreticians on modern issues of race and racism. Readers who think of Du Bois simply as a brilliant Black man who wrote with elegance and insight into the souls of *his* people underestimate the magnitude of his accomplishments and burdens as a brilliant young man in an era and society that did not expect to find brilliant minds behind black faces. They also misunderstand his relationship to the southern rural worshippers about whose preachers, musics and frenzies he wrote. Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* as an outsider who took interest in a community, engaged their music, and tried to write that music and experience into a text that invites other, perhaps more distant outsiders into a meaningful experience with that community. In short, Du Bois the sociologist, historiographer, social activist and public intellectual is also, by interest if not by method, Du Bois the proto-ethnomusicologist.

Reading Ethnomusicology through the Veil

While Du Bois's work offers valuable insights, documentary evidence, and theories for current ethnomusicology, his work bears little resemblance to that of the discipline's founders who lived and worked in his lifetime. Still, the tools he created for describing and critiquing race as the core problem of America in the 20th century offer insight into the development of modern ethnomusicology from a discipline of selective objectivism and arbitrary Euro-centric standards into a humanizing, humanistic endeavor dedicated to violating boundaries of apparent unknowability that separate "them" – any them – from "us."

The Disciplining of Music-Things

The origins of ethnomusicology as a discipline began with the emergence of comparative musicology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to Willard Rhodes, Guido Adler published the first reference to comparative musicology as a discipline occurred in

1885 – the same year that Du Bois journeyed south from Great Barrington, Massachusetts to enroll at Fisk University. Rhodes translates Adler’s definition as:

...the comparison of the musical works – especially of folksongs – of the various peoples of the earth for ethnographical purposes, and the classification of them according to their various forms. (1956: 458-9)

Nearly four decades later, the “Notes and News” of *American Anthropologist* announced the formation of The Society for Comparative Musicology following its first meeting on 13 February 1933. The announcement described the society’s aims and scope in part as follows:

1. Establishment in New York of “Phonographic Archives” comparable to those in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, and Leningrad. This involves the collection (a) of selected existing commercial discs of various kinds from authentic, traditional selections to all sorts of hybrids and experiments...
2. Acquisition of funds for the employment of the few skilled field and laboratory workers we have and for the education, both musical and anthropological, of the many more that are needed.
3. The perfecting of apparatus, and the equipping and financing of field expeditions to all parts of the world (Apr. – Jun., 1933: 339-400).

These descriptions are separated by nearly half a century; however, they share a common understanding of “musical works” and recordings of sound as the primary objects of study. Comparative musicology defined itself through attention to music as sound and artifact. In such a position, it exhibits a strange blend of characteristics associated at once with natural science and the humanities. The ability to treat fixed recordings and musical artifacts as objects of analysis led to exhausting, but certainly not exhaustive, collections of music-things and a wide variety of inventive systems for classifying and analyzing these objects of sound. This, in turn, led to a renaissance of thinking and rethinking about the relationship between music and humankind. Following patterns of development seen in a variety of disciplines with foundations in cultural products and processes (linguistics, anthropology, etc.), the modern discipline of ethnomusicology considered first these objects, elements, and structures of musical systems, then relationships between those systems and their cultures, and more recently the cultures themselves as the primary targets of the discipline’s inquiries.

Even after the paradigm shifts of the mid-20th century, the contributions of comparative musicologists such as Otto Abraham, Carl Stumpf, Curt Sachs, and Erich von Hornbostel continue to be relevant to contemporary ethnomusicology. Their scholarly and professional efforts helped to gather a critical mass not only of music-things and theories of

music-things, but also of scholarly interest, institutional cache, and intellectual credibility that facilitated the paradigm shift from comparative musicology to ethnomusicology in the 1950s. Bruno Nettl nominates Carl Stumpf and A.J. Ellis as candidates for the title of “first ethnomusicologist” for their contributions to the field of comparative musicology citing respectively one of the earliest studies of “the musical system of a single tribe with emphasis on the structure of scale and melody” and “contributions to methodology – the so-called cents system of measuring intervals” respectively (1964: 14-5). Their emphasis on systematization and the objective measurement of structure typify the early concerns of the discipline, as does their attentiveness to complete musical systems and (presumably) universally applicable scientific methods of measurement and comparison. Rhodes includes Stumpf’s and Ellis’s work somewhat less charitably under the category of the earliest comparative musicology, a period that he describes as being “so burdened with the investigation of musicological problems that the material often received scant ethnological treatment” (1956: 459). The culturally non-specific approach to systematization and detail enshrined in Sachs and Hornbostel’s 1914 system of organology (Baines and Wachsmann 1961), likewise, belongs in this category of early objectivist study.

The common bond between these musicological explorations of a single musical system (Stumpf), a unit for measuring interval (Ellis), and a system of organology (Sachs and Hornbostel) based entirely on “those features which can be identified from the visible form of the instrument avoiding subjective preferences and leaving the instrument itself unmeddled with” (Dournon 1992: 251¹), is a shared approach to musicology as the study of music-things independent of cultural context. These scholars approached music as scientists, focusing primarily on those features of music that they could subject to some form of objective observation and systematic comparison. The particular understanding of music implied by this approach marks a major point of disagreement and distinction between comparative musicology and ethnomusicology. The collection and analysis of music-things served as a necessary and productive step in the study of music as an important aspect of culture to be explored in particular contexts, and the accumulation of method, intellect, and cultural curiosity that comparative musicology produced led to the birth of its successor, ethnomusicology.

¹ Presumably quoting from Baines and Wachsmann’s (1961) translation of “Systematik der Musikinstrumente.”

Single Consciousness

Assumptions about the fundamental superiority and centrality of European culture undergird the methods of comparative musicology. As complicated as the ever-expanding systems of organology and the ever-more-exacting measurements of pitch and interval were to create and interpret, it would have been even more difficult to construct such systems without relying implicitly on European standards for comparison. Experience with African American musical culture seems, however, to have provided some of the impetus for the paradigm shift in the 1960s. As early as 1928, Hornbostel comments on the musical qualities of the African continent and its American diaspora, noting with mingled admiration and concern:

The African Negroes are uncommonly gifted for music – probably, on an average, more so than the white race. This is clear not only from the high development of African music, especially as regards polyphony and rhythm, but a very curious fact, the fact that the negro slaves in America and their descendants, abandoning their original musical style, have adapted themselves to that of their white masters and produced a new kind of folk-music in that style... At the same time this shows how readily the Negro abandons his own style of music for that of the European... As yet, we hardly know what African music is. If we do not hasten to collect it systematically and to record it by means of the phonograph, we shall not even learn what it was. (1928: 60)

Hornbostel's writing reveals assumptions of the time regarding the European sources of African American musical traditions as well as the near certainty that the spread of European musical culture would destroy the primitive but admirable systems of the rest of the world.

Hornbostel's frames his report in answer to two questions:

1. What is African music like as compared to our own?
2. How can it be made use of in Church and school? (ibid: 30)

And he provides two answers:

1. African and (modern) European music are constructed on entirely different principles, and therefore
2. they cannot be fused into one but only the one or the other can be used without compromise. (ibid)

Hornbostel acknowledges differences between the musical system of Europe and America and that of Africa, but his analysis and methods proceed from an assumed standard of European classical music, even when complex African rhythmic patterns refuse to fit easily into classical meters. He does not pay any significant attention to cultural contexts of music,

focusing instead on recording, transcribing, and analyzing the sounds. Hornbostel's description of African Americans abandoning their musical culture stands in stark contrast to Du Bois's description of American religious music from a quarter century earlier:

The Methodists and Baptists of America owe much of their condition to the silent but potent influence of their millions of Negro converts. Especially is this noticeable in the South... where the religion of the poor whites is a plain copy of Negro thought and methods. The mass of "gospel" hymns which has swept through American churches and well-nigh ruined our sense of song consists largely of debased imitations of Negro melodies made by ears that caught the jingle but not the music, the body but not the soul, of the Jubilee songs. It is thus clear that the study of Negro religion is not only a vital part of the history of the Negro in America, but no uninteresting part of American history (1903: 135-6).

Du Bois's poetic distinction between jingle and music and between body and soul creates a helpful short-hand for considering different definitions of music. Hornbostel and the comparative musicologists tended to focus on bodies – groups of songs, structures of melodies, collections of texts, and even physical artifacts of music – while Du Bois and many current ethnomusicologists emphasize souls – the aesthetics of performance, the function of music in community, and living musical traditions.

Du Bois seems here to be somewhat less than enthusiastic about these living traditions. He opines that these white imitations of Negro melodies have "well-nigh ruined" *his* sense of song, by which he seems to stake a claim on European and Euro-American hymnody. He also locates the South "a long way behind the North" in its development of theology and religious philosophy along the continuum from "the heathenism of the Gold Coast to the institutional Negro church of Chicago" (1903: 121N). Du Bois regards the imitation of Jubilee songs by the rest of America with revulsion appropriate for a person encountering a mechanically reanimated corpse – a soulless body performing an imitation of life. Still, his distinction between body and soul, jingle and music, form and function, creates space for a nuanced analysis of change and encounters between music cultures that Hornbostel's notion of fundamentally exclusive sonic systems denies.

Folklore and Black Folk and Folk Life

Du Bois was not a direct participant in comparative musicology; his study of "Black folk" links him more directly to folklorists of the mid-20th century whose interest in folk of varying colors and creeds contributed significantly to the modern methods and modes of inquiry

that characterize contemporary ethnomusicology. A 1940 thesis by John Henry Faulk, “Ten Negro Sermons,” presents, as the title suggests, a series of ten almost-transcriptions based on sermons preached by men whom Faulk identifies as “old-time Negro preachers” (1940: 2). I qualify the term “transcriptions” because these detailed scripts are Faulk’s recreations of full sermons based on notes that he took while listening to the sermons. Faulk’s recreations include a variety of phonetic spellings that attempt to convey a sense of the various preacher’s accents and dialects, details that are probably more precise than accurate, considering his reported methodology.

Setting aside the problems involved with reading through Faulk’s rough recreation of preachers’ dialects, his thesis points toward some important features of a developing ethnomusicological study of African American religion. Faulk’s self-reported motivation for documenting these preachers and their sermons was his observation that, “the folk elements in Negro religion are disappearing rapidly from the sermons of the Negro preacher [and] the old-time Negro preacher is also disappearing,” informed by his assessment that, “their sermons are often the truest expressions of their folk-religion to be found” (1940: 2-3). In addition to marking the mid-20th-century tendency of ethnographers of all stripes to view their fields of interest as endangered but ultimately archivable traditions, Faulk identifies the preacher and the sermon as a person and event of special significance. He goes on to make a powerful case for ethnomusicology’s utility in looking beyond Du Bois’s three-part structure when he comments on a significant omission from his transcriptions:

Two important elements of every Negro sermon are absent from the sermons included in this study. Yet they were certainly present when the sermons were preached. But they are necessarily lacking in my attempted reproductions. One is the background of enthusiastic comment and noises from the congregation that lend much rhythm and flavor to the sermon. The Negro preacher builds his sermon around, and blends it with this rhythmic chorus. A sermon without such a background is comparable to an orchestra without a rhythm section. (ibid: 3)

Faulk, an outsider with an interest in the musicality of the African American pulpit tradition offers one of the earliest acknowledgements of the importance of congregational participation in the Black church sermon. Like his comparative musicologist contemporaries, Faulk draws comparisons directly to the Western classical tradition, but he does notice the significant contribution of the congregation.

At about the same time, George Pullen Jackson's *White and Negro Spirituals* (1943) offers extensive analysis of the sounds of American spirituals, dividing tellingly into two sections, "Part One: The Whole Story Of American Religious Folk Song As The White People Sang It" and "Part Two: The Whole Story Of American Religious Folk Song As The Negroes Sang It." Jackson's text is remarkable not only for the breadth of coverage he claims to offer – it is difficult to imagine any contemporary ethnomusicologist claiming to tell *the* story, much less the *whole* story of anything – but more significantly because it replicates E. Franklin Frazier's arguments about the utter absence of African retentions in African American culture. In his final section, "Farewell to Africa," Jackson refers to Frazier's chief critic, Melville Herskovits, and the intense debate regarding African retentions:

A number of learned men and women have gone to Africa and other lands of negro concentration in their search for origins. They haven't, to my knowledge, found there a single tune or text or melodic song pattern that they could trace to the religious environs of the United States. But still they hold to the African source theory. Still they take issue sharply with those of us who do not accept their views. (1943: 292)

With an apparent blend of smugness and generosity, Jackson suggests that his critics' utter failure to find evidence to support their claims with sounds from Africa does not mean that they will always be so unsuccessful. His final sentences speak volumes:

Others may in the future be more successful because more intent on finding the Ethiopian in the song-fuel heap. I wish them luck. That is their job. I have done mine." (ibid: 294)

These statements linking success and intent summarize Jackson's work fairly well – by focusing intently on certain features of importance to European musical systems, Jackson was extraordinarily successful in ignoring the dramatic performance context from his introduction:

Negroes on the stage or the air singing their own religious songs. Fisk University groups and their likes. Slow songs like 'Swing Low' and fast ones like 'Josh'a fit de Battle. Melting harmonies of the conventional sort. Voices with African smoothness. Futile attempts of white singers to produce the same atmosphere (ibid: 1)

Only a pervasive presumption of European cultural superiority and a singular focus on a fraction of the elements of any musical performance could have permitted Jackson to arrive at a conclusion where he "reclaims" the spirituals as the cultural property of the British Isles.

In reading Faulk and Jackson I feel more empathy for these scholars than my summaries might suggest. When reading their texts, I encountered serious and committed

writers whose failure to live and work as 21st-century ethnomusicologists is, of course, no failure at all. Faulk and Hornbostel in particular write from obvious positions of expertise, both in the sounds that they describe and the methods by which they compare them to the arbitrary standards of European classical traditions. These proto-ethnomusicologists and others such as Ramsey (1956), Cray (1961), and Tallmadge (1961) stand as examples of comparative musicology's various assumptions about the nature of music as sound and its methodologies grounded in early-20th-century notions of Euro-American cultural supremacy. Faulk, a folklorist who can only be claimed by ethnomusicologists in hindsight, offers an early example of the kind of qualitative ethnographic detail that one finds in more current ethnomusicology. If the imperfections in my writing and the flaws in my interpretation can reveal to future generations the limited vision of an individual and an era that still sees through a veil but darkly, then time spent writing and reading this dissertation will have been well spent.

Becoming Ethnomusicology

The mid 1950s witnessed a fundamental shift in the discipline's foundational paradigm. During this time, scholarly debate focused on the inadequacy of "comparative musicology" as a signifier for the discipline. One primary concern involved the redundancy and reductivity of using the adjective "comparative" as a descriptor for the scientific study of music. According to the prevailing notion in discussions, comparison was a necessary component of any science. Furthermore, any truly scientific discipline needed to employ not only comparative methods, but also a variety of other methods involved in the collection and organization of the information to be compared (Rhodes 1956, "Whither Ethnomusicology" 1959, Merriam 1960, etc.). From this perspective, comparison was implicitly integrated into the sciencing of music; making it explicit in the discipline's name suggested that comparative musicology was *only* comparative and, therefore, an incomplete science. Debate about the name occurred in tandem with general discussion of the nature and identity of the developing field; as comparative musicology was felt to be inadequate because of its use of the term "comparative," and musicology was already taken, the disciplinary heirs of Stumpf and Ellis embraced the opportunity to debate not only a new name for the discipline, but also the identity of the entity they sought to rechristen.

Neither the publication of *Ethnomusicology* in 1950 nor the founding of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) later that decade mark a decisive transformation of the discipline; on the contrary, both the early publications of SEM and Kunst's booklet, *Ethnomusicology* (1950) address the issues of comparative musicology and employ its methods. Still, the name change and the establishment of SEM facilitated debate about the nature of the discipline. The name change also signaled a debate about the nature of music. Just as the empirical understanding of music-things and universal standards of comparison formed the core of comparative musicology, a correspondingly fundamental shift in focus toward the integration of music and culture characterizes the most recent half-century of ethnomusicology. Beginning with the debates of the 1950s, the methodological foundations of ethnomusicology exhibit a pattern of culturally determined music, musical culture, and music as culture replacing music-things as the core concepts and concerns of the discipline.

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, the defining traits of contemporary ethnomusicology began to surface in studies of African American religious and musical culture. The 1950 meeting of the International Folk Music Council (IFMC), an event that Nettl highlights as significant to the shifting identity of ethnomusicology in the middle of the 20th century, included the presentation and discussion of a paper by Richard Alan Waterman addressing "Gospel Hymns of a Negro Church in Chicago," published in 1951 as a part of a broader record of the meeting in the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*. Waterman comments on the variety of preaching ranging from "the folk sermons associated with the rural churches of the South to sermons indistinguishable from those of any other standard North American Protestant sect" (1951:87). He describes various uses and styles of music in worship, paying special attention to "hot" music, the relationship between church and commercial music, "Dorseys," call and response, the prominence and near dominance of music in worship, and innovations in the function of the choir in larger, wealthier churches. Having addressed Du Bois's preacher and music, he touches on frenzy, explaining:

Since all but the most "upper" of upper-class American Negro churches are likely to be "pentacostal" [sic] in persuasion, it is not surprising that the church under discussion subscribes to the doctrine of possession by the Holy Ghost and that in every church service there are many instances of such possession, signaled by involuntary jerking and twitching movements, high-pitched helps,² and occasionally, "talking in tongues." While these sometimes occur during the more rhythmical passages of the sermon, they

² The text prints "helps," although "yelps" seems to make more sense in context.

are most commonly brought on by the music. Indeed, the worth of a religious song is likely to be evaluated by members of the congregation in terms of the number of possessions it induces (1951: 88).

Without ever citing Du Bois, Waterman provides evidence of the enduring relevance of the preacher, the music, and the frenzy five decades after *The Souls of Black Folks*. His paper also demonstrates the expanding scope of the field by addressing not only the gospel hymns but also, at least in passing, the congregation and its significance as a discerning community with its own standards of musical quality.

The discussion of Waterman's paper included in the 1951 publication reveals a discipline still focused on the pedigree of various musical and cultural practices. The recorded discussants, including George Herzog and George Pullen Jackson focus almost exclusively on theorized influences between spirituals and jazz (which Herzog dismisses as presumptive and unproven) and the true origins of melodies and styles shared by Black and White churches (which Jackson credits predictably to European traditions), but Waterman himself devotes the majority of his paper to describing the way that music functions in one "Negro Church in Chicago." Apart from demonstrating the continued utility of Du Bois's framework along with a musically grounded tangent of the Frazier-Herskovitz debates, the published version of Waterman's paper offers a snapshot of a discipline with vaguely paternalistic but benevolent attitudes toward these particular Black church-folk and the breadth, depth, and significance of their particular musical practices in the context in which he encountered them.

In 1955, nine years before the publication of *Anthropology of Music*, Merriam published a review of anthropological research on music in American culture in which spirituals, "hot" music, and other varieties of sacred and secular African American music help him to ask questions about music and culture in America that point directly toward the most influential arguments he eventually makes in 1964. Drawing from research and criticism from Herzog (1938), Bascomb (1953), Berger (1947), Borneman (1946) and Slotkin (1943), Merriam muses on the inconsistencies of scholarship on the musics America, pointing out the different assumptions and modes of inquiry employed toward the study of various categories of American music which he identifies as:

...academic music, most often discussed under the misleading term "classical"; folk music of white communities; popular music, as distinctly differentiated from jazz and including hit tunes of the day; and Negro music,

which should perhaps be subdivided to distinguish jazz from other forms of musical expression. (1955: 1173).

He draws on evidence from African American musical traditions including spirituals and jazz to suggest that cultural associations with musical traditions – the status of musicians, the context of performance, and the people with whom it is associated – are both important, and, according to Merriam in 1955, understudied and poorly understood. Furthermore, Merriam advocates for anthropological approaches in part because of their tendency to focus attention on music as it occurs in the moment – music as living tradition rather than as museum collection. He contrasts this approach with others that he ascribes to folk lore and humanistic scholarship in his time, lamenting what he diagnoses as their myopic focus on historical influences in a search for original forms that misunderstand processes of acculturation, hybridization, and innovation as bastardization, corruption, and degeneracy.

Calls and Responses to Double-Consciousness in Ethnomusicology

Roughly a decade later, Alan Merriam's *Anthropology of Music* (1964) crystallized the first truly ethnomusicological approach to music in culture and music as culture. Introducing the study of ethnomusicology, Merriam describes the discipline as a compound of two distinct parts: the musicological and the ethnological. Then, rather than questioning which aspect of the discipline should be emphasized, he articulates a model that incorporates both while relying heavily on the methods of anthropology. Merriam takes the dual nature of ethnomusicology as an indisputable fact, in part because of the way he defined music. In describing his method, Merriam presents music as a system coextensive with culture, expanding prior understandings of music as sound to include behavior in relation to music and even abstract thought about music as part of this total system. Merriam advocated a shift from studying music as an object of sound to the study of music as a human process, an expression of culture, or even as culture itself. He transformed the core of the discipline by asserting that "every music system is predicated upon a series of concepts which integrate music into the activities of the society at large and define and place it as a phenomenon of life among other phenomena," (1964: 63) an assertion that he applied and advanced for the remainder of his life.

From this model of music, Merriam constructed a model for ethnomusicology that engages not only the sound, but also the performance of music and the way sound and

performance are interdependent with other cultural phenomena. Merriam describes ethnomusicology as a union between ethnology and musicology, but clarifies that the union is both incomplete and unstable. According to Merriam, neither anthropology nor musicology fulfills the role of examining music as an expressive element of culture. To properly fill that role, Merriam argues that ethnomusicology must develop its own theoretical and methodological framework. He describes this framework as a bridge between the social sciences and the humanities and a collaboration between folk and analytical evaluation, one oriented toward understanding of the many aspects that typify music. Such a system must, according to Merriam, approach music on three levels: “conceptualization about music, behavior in relation to music, and music sound itself” (1964: 32).

Merriam’s model provoked a great deal of debate, eliciting comments both from admirers and detractors. *Current Anthropology* published a collection of 14 reviews accompanied by a response from Merriam. The reviews include a variety of appreciative and somewhat less appreciative critiques from several notable scholars including John Blacking, Mantle Hood, and Bruno Nettl. Blacking characterizes *Anthropology of Music* as “a great service to both anthropology and ethnomusicology ... [that] draw[s] together a wide range of information and ideas about music in culture” (1966: 218). Hood, by stark contrast, only mentions Merriam’s model of an anthropology of music in his final paragraph. Following a series of stylistic criticisms and back-handed compliments, Hood concludes:

From time to time, Merriam complains that studies in ethnomusicology too often have been narrow in their exclusive treatment of music per se. Although his study can be criticized for swinging too far toward the opposite extreme, a number of ideas founded on personal experience and the tapestry of ideas borrowed from other writers makes *The Anthropology of Music* an important reference for the serious student of ethnomusicology. (ibid: 223)

Nettl’s review presents a more balanced reading of Merriam’s work, although his primary criticism seems to be a result of his misreading of Merriam’s text. Embracing Merriam’s call to explore music “as behavior and event and in its context as an ingredient of culture,” Nettl takes issue with what he perceives as Merriam’s insistence that ethnomusicological research *must* be approached in two separate ways (ibid: 225). Merriam’s response clarifies his position, which in hindsight seems clear enough in the preface to *The Anthropology of Music*, that while ethnomusicology *tends* to be approached in one way by anthropologists and in a different way by musicologists, his goal and his presumption of his readers’ goal is a balanced and unified approach to the study of music in culture.

In another foundational publication from 1964, *Theory and Methodology in Ethnomusicology*, Bruno Nettl offers his own impressions of the discipline, describing ethnomusicologists as people who have worked:

...on the one hand, as the special kind of musicologist who investigates exotic music and, on the other hand, as the special kind of anthropologist who investigates music rather than other aspects of human culture... outside Western civilization. (1964: 2)

Nettl's two-hatted ethnomusicologist resonates with Merriam's and explains some of Nettl's concerns that Merriam's *Anthropology of Music* might have advocated an either-or approach to ethnomusicology. Nettl continues in his text to explain the close relationship between the two branches of ethnomusicology and in later texts to adopt a practice of ethnomusicology quite similar to Merriam's, although Nettl's blend retains more of an emphasis on the techniques of musicology while embracing Merriam's theory of music as a component or facet of culture.

A generation later, leaders of the discipline like Kay Kaufmann Shelemay and Jeff Todd Titon continued to shape ethnomusicology's scope and methods, particularly as they relate to the concept of music as culture and the definitions of field research. Titon (1988, 1997a, 1997b) further humanizes ethnomusicology's purpose, focusing a portion of the field toward "knowing people making music" (1997b: 257). His attention to people as the musical performers of culture furthers Merriam's rejection of music as a self-contained system and follows decades of methodological transformation, shifting away from transcription of musical sound to field research involving representation and analysis of experienced musical culture, musical performance, and, of course, musical people.

Contemporary constructions of ethnomusicology focus explicitly on methodology, although there are implicit strictures limiting the scope of the field that persist decades after Alan Merriam's *The Anthropology of Music* shifted the field away from comparative musicology to a more interpretive, humanistic study of music-as-culture. Kay Kaufman Shelemay, a former president of the Society for Ethnomusicology, describes the persistent institutional preference for overseas field research as reflected in funding priorities, explaining that,

We now acknowledge that cultural difference can be studied at home as well as abroad... In fact, such diasporic studies are becoming increasingly important to traditional area-studies research conducted abroad. However... such scholarship is being constrained by the institutionalization of field research as an essentially foreign pursuit. (16 February 1994 *The Chronicle of Higher Education*)

Shelemay's argument challenges Nettl's 1964 definition of ethnomusicology as a discipline engaged in a field "outside Western culture" while acknowledging its enduring impact on the way research is funded and, therefore, conducted. Significantly, Nettl also shows interest in field research that begins "at home," observing in one of the essays he added to the updated edition of *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*:

One wonders what all of this does to our conception of fieldwork, whether the term still has meaning, whether we can now always be distinguished from tourists, journalists, sociologists. I would argue that we can, because we insist on being guided by our concept of the "complex whole," but our field techniques and our conceptions of cultural and personal identity have widened. The concepts of insider and outsider and their relationships have become even more complex. (2005: 187)

This dissertation supports Shelemay's claims about domestic ethnographic research – it is possible, potentially valuable, and probably unfunded, but it also forces me to struggle with the messiness that starts Nettl wondering. The messiness is, of course, a pale shadow of the deadly peril that necessitated double-consciousness in the first place. The various privileges acquired through nature and nurture and naiveté that make my intersection of home, field, and academy merely messy while similar tensions in dissimilar circumstances inspire fear and violence. The responsibilities of the privileged partial outsider are not more complicated when home and field overlap more completely, but their calls are clearer and more constant.

Du Bois engaged "the complex whole" a century ago, and his intellectual career adds activist, advocate, educator, prophet, provocateur, and expatriot to Nettl's list of complex relationships, marking the intersection between the ivory tower and the separate and unequal schools of 18th- and 21st-Century Tennessee as, "the mountain path to Canaan: longer than the highways of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life." (1903: 13) Ethnographers who respond to the calls to rigorous scholarship and ethical partnership with the communities that welcome them as friends, colleagues, and confidants might find insight, if not comfort, in the similar, sometimes exponentially more intense doubling pressures that Du Bois analyzed and engaged in his life and scholarship.

The Doors of the Church

The study of religious culture is nothing new for ethnomusicology. In one form or another, ethnomusicologists have always been engaged in the study of religion, even when

disciplinary paradigms obscured the sacred significance of the subjects they studied. In a species that regards *seeing* as believing, the power of *invisible* sound and song to transform a moment from ordinary to extraordinary stands as a routine and nearly-universal miracle. The pageantry of musical and religious performance are responses to the same human urges – the disciplining of sound and spirit, the refinement of techniques for making and moving communities. Music and religion, like so many other things segregated by accidents of language, history, and power in universities and beyond have been divided by specialization and departmentalization such that disciplinary distinctions create the illusion of difference. Sachs and Hornbostle’s system of organological classification ignores the cultural function of the instruments it categorizes, but that does not strip the instruments of their roles as integral parts of sacred celebrations. Birth, death, sex, marriage, seasonal cycles, social organization, war, suffering, eating, drinking, and being merry, and every other significant feature of the human condition are wound round and through with the doing of music and religion. Responsible scholars may choose to address or ignore musical, religious, and other aspects of whatever cultural question they engage with their research, but from Guido Adler to Randy, Paula, and Simon, commenters on the sound and substance of musical culture also engage, intentionally or otherwise, the stuff of religion.

Titon and others (see Barz 2003, Summit 2000, Sullivan 1997) engage the coextensive fields of music and religion explicitly. Such an approach would not have been possible under the rubric of comparative musicology. Their work in the area of music and religion succeeds because they approach their field research with attention to *meaning* in culture rather than simply the discernment of structure. Titon and his colleagues think seriously about religion, with Titon explaining:

Religion is an ideology embodied in a cultural system. It explains the nature of reality and the meaning of life, and it offers directives for human conduct. Religion’s symbolic forms find expression in ritual, myth, doctrine, ethics, institutions, and the fabric of the believer’s daily life. Science explains the nature of reality, but it does not tell people how to act. (1988: 144)

By identifying musical culture, music as culture, or people making music as the object of ethnomusicological study, Merriam, Nettl, and Titon open the door to the common study of religion and music as joint expressions of culture and coextensive practices of musically religious or religiously musical people.

Furthermore, ethnomusicology's history of formal engagement with African American preaching and worship traditions in particular reflects changes in the discipline as well as the broader academic community. The discipline's exploration of African American musical and religious culture covers some of the major developments in humanistic social science and philosophy. A survey of ethnomusicological engagement with these cultures from "African Negro Music" (Hornbostel 1928) through the writings of Richard Alan Waterman and Alan Merriam to more contemporary writers including Jeff Titon and Therese Smith, leads a reader through some of the most significant changes in academic understandings of religion and race in America as well as the shift from comparative musicology to ethnomusicology. It also suggests that an ethnomusicological perspective may be particularly helpful in studying certain overlooked features of African American religious communities. The musics of slaves and their descendants give the lie to the systematic dehumanization of black bodies that was both a prerequisite for and a result of America's enslavement culture. Music humanizes in spite of the best efforts of prejudice and powerful self-interest such that ethnomusicology as the knowing of musical people is also – inescapably so – an encounter with the undeniable humanity of the people whose musics draw us into dialogue. It hardly matters whether that siren song calls a "Fisk man" into the hills of Tennessee for a summer revival, a Blues scholar and folklorist into C.L. Franklin's office, an Irish ethnographer to Lafayette County, Mississippi via Brown University, or a Vanderbilt graduate student a few blocks north to the doors of Corinthian Baptist Church; whether or not we choose to answer the call – in the academy, and in the field – the doors of the church are open.

Fact, Truth, and Faith in the Field

Facts do not speak for themselves. They are not self-evident, nor are they universally accessible. The fact is, different modes of discourse, different perspectives, and different communities utilize and recognize very different things as facts. Ethnomusicology and other interpretive disciplines (anthropology, literary criticism, etc.) require scholars to balance different, sometimes competing concepts of facts in order to honor the integrity of the culture or artifacts they seek to interpret as well as the academic community to which they address their interpretations. Qualitative ethnographic field research creates a particularly ephemeral category of fact – the experience of life in the field, experienced in real-time

through the lens of the ethnographer’s person, history, and idiosyncratic interests. The overwhelming majority of those “facts” never make it into print; the data gathered by the ethnographer-as-instrument vanish almost in the moment they occur in the constant flow of experience into the ethnographer’s consciousness. Instead, ethnographers reconstruct and represent those facts in fieldnotes – descriptions of remembered events always already shaped by the ethnographer’s interpretations. This makes ethnography fundamentally different from laboratory science. The ethnographer stands between the things he describes and the interpretive accounts that some mistake for descriptive reports.



Figure 9: Two candidates for baptism sitting between two members of the Mothers’ Board

Along with these reconstructed recollections, contemporary ethnomusicologists present photographs, audio and video recordings, and various transcriptions of those recorded events. While even the “hard” evidence of visual and audio documentation are themselves shaped by conventions that govern those artifacts’ creation and interpretation, they seem to be somewhat more authentic and “truthy” than a fieldnote. This distinction

seems reasonable – pictures don't lie – but it overlooks the problem of observer effect. In addition to limits imposed by focusing on a single moment in time and the impact of converting that full-color, live-action, three-dimensional moment into a timeless two-dimensional representation, the camera (or the microphone with sound events) changes the environment and influences the performances of the people involved. Figure 9 shows Mother McKellery and Mother Cross flanking two candidates for baptism. One of those candidates and both of the mothers are looking toward the pulpit and the choir, performing as attentive worshipers. The second candidate, an 8-year old girl, shows more interest in the camera and the photographer.



Figure 10: Two candidates for ordination, Rev. Gleason Rogers and Rev. Kim Sheehan

Figure 10 shows two candidates for ordination, Rev. Gleason Rogers and Rev. Kim Sheehan, on the same day. Although the ministers are not looking at the camera in the photograph, they are fully aware of its presence. A few seconds before I took this

photograph, they were staring directly at it and me. I directed their attention back to the pulpit, producing a posed “candid” photograph.

These photographs combine to illustrate some of the most significant features of the observer effect for ethnography. Without a camera to distract her, the 8-year old girl in figure 9 would probably not have been staring in that direction. My camera and I did not simply capture a moment, we created that moment. Likewise, in figure 10 we find an image that is the result of my inadvertently distracting the candidates for ordination and then directing them to resume their attentive posture. The resulting photograph bears a strong and intentional resemblance to the scene that prompted me to raise my camera in the first place, but it is a self-conscious reconstruction. That the candidates for ordination feign unawareness of the camera while the candidate for baptism performs enthusiastic recognition of the same is evidence of their different culturally and socially conditioned understandings of the role of that camera and that photographer in that moment. Rev. Gleason and Rev. Kim’s apparent disregard for the camera calls into question the similar postures of the church mothers and the male candidate in figure 9. Were they unaware of the camera, uninterested in the camera, or deliberately presenting their attentiveness to the pulpit?

In ethnographic field research, context matters. It changes what counts as fact. The researcher, his methods, and his performance of his identity in the field are as much a part of that context as anything else. The facts are shaped by the researcher’s contributions to context, but we still value candid moments – times when we can reasonably believe that the events we observe and document might have occurred in similar ways even without our presence. Accordingly, I rely heavily in this text on conspicuously public performances, especially those that occur in worship.

Ethnographers use the term participant observation to describe research in which one enters into a community’s activities, taking on accessible roles in order to minimize disruption to the community. Surveys and interviews are useful, even necessary techniques for learning certain things about communities and individuals, but the preaching, singing, prayer, and other components of weekly worship at Corinthian offer an ideal setting for participant observation because there are so many other participant observers. The ethnographer and his equipment are arguably the most important audience in a private interview, but he becomes significantly less important when a deacon prays to God on

behalf of the church or when a choir and soloist lift up a song in anticipation of the pastor's sermon. This is especially true when that ethnographer's presence becomes routine. After two years as a regular participant in the life of the church, questions about "my book" have become rare. People at the church ask about my day. They ask about my wife. They ask me questions in my capacity as an usher and as one of the several people who operate the church's sound equipment. By and large, I feel relatively confident that my presence *as an ethnographer* has become less intrusive. This does not diminish my presence as a church member, an usher, the spouse of a minister, a white guy, or any other category of identity that I perform publicly, but it does suggest to me that my presence has roughly the same influence as that of the person next to me on prayer, preaching, singing, and worship. I have considerably more impact on the way those performed acts of worship are documented, interpreted, and represented here, but I have a great deal of faith in the authenticity of the events on which my work is based.

In interviews, my presence and my ethnographic intentions are more obvious. I create an interaction – the interview – that would not otherwise occur. I collaborate with my interview partner to explore issues that he or she might not otherwise choose to discuss. In interviews, well-intentioned people tell me what they believe, what they think I want to hear, and what they want me to hear, producing a dialogical equivalent to a field note. The factual accuracy of personal narratives and other utterances in the field is less important to ethnography than their ability to faithfully communicate cultural values. The extent to which a performance is truly *from* and *of* an individual is more significant than whether it offers a historically accurate account *about* that individual. The fictions we weave about our identity and origins are at least as important as and much more accessible than the facts that might contradict or confirm them. Consider the following testimony from Pastor Fuzz:

Testimony: One day I asked the Lord to give me a sign that he wanted me at Corinthian. I asked Him to turn ONE WAY 33rd Avenue into a TWO WAY street. Two weeks later without any more thoughts of my request 33rd Avenue was named temporarily TWO WAY due to construction. After construction was completed it was permanently TWO WAY with new sidewalks and streetlights on both sides. Who would not serve a God like this!

(Pastor's letter to the church, 12 August 2007)

Pastor Fuzz's account offers several facts that one could investigate about 33rd Avenue, but its most important revelations here concern his faith, his understanding of his relationship with God, and the value of communicating this to his congregation. Unless it is a

remarkably feeble lie – if, for example, 33rd Avenue never was a one way street – or Pastor Fuzz went to extraordinary measures to document his request to the Lord, it would be extremely difficult to confirm or refute his account. Evidence supporting or disproving the potentially observable facts of the testimony, would ultimately have little bearing on the truthiness of the pastor’s theological and personal claims. Even if the road’s history did not support his account, his presentation of God as a god who responds to prayer in observable ways and offers signs to his people stands as an important statement about Corinthian’s theology. His assertion that God provided him with a sign that he should be at Corinthian communicates several things about his specific understanding of his place at Corinthian and a general sense of how God’s guidance matters in decisions that others might regard as personal career choices. One need not agree with Pastor Fuzz’s theology to see how his testimony about sidewalks and streetlights relies on a certain understanding of the way God works – an understanding that his congregants must share on some level in order for his testimony to be persuasive.

That shared view of the way the world works, which at Corinthian includes the way that God works in the world, goes by different names in different communities. In various incarnations – habitus, world-view, cosmology, culture and others – it is one of the great shared fascinations of the academy. At Corinthian, it is called faith. Pastor Fuzz explains it this way:

Faith - the substance of things hoped for. Seems that we got more faith _ in those things that don't require faith _ than we do in _ that thing _ that makes a way for us.

We' a people of faith.

Faith is what's brought us through.

It ought to be somebody here that remember that there was a time in your life _ when all you had _ was your faith.

The only answer _ that you had to your struggle, _ the only solution _ that you had to your problem _ was _ "I know the Lord will make a way."

The only answer we had many times was just our faith.

Don't forget about _ having faith _ in God.

Many of us have misplaced our faith _ and we've been let down so many times.

Many of us have had our faith _ in the wrong things _ the wrong people _ and those things have failed us, haven't they?

So I want to remind _ somebody to ask yourself this afternoon, _ "Where is _ my faith?"

(Enoch Fuzz, 3 June 2007, Sermon: "Where is Your Faith?")

Pastor Fuzz’s question, “Where is my faith?” is a fair question for scholars as well as worshipers. In writing this document, I put my faith in a process of field research that

involves over two years of living in North Nashville, participating in the worship and social life of the church and cultivating sincere and respectful relationships with the congregation and individual members. I put my faith in Corinthian and their pastor's desire to live their faith publicly. Furthermore, I put my faith in my ability to represent that publicly lived faith to the academic community in a way that allows scholars and students to consider how the performed culture of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church relates to the broader Black Church tradition, American religiosity, and broad questions about human culture.

On Performance

I use performance as a core concept for understanding the events I encounter in my research and trying to understand the significance of those various events. Although it may cause brief confusion for readers who associate the term with an emphasis on form or fashion over substance, I believe that a consistent approach to understanding religion through performance will allow us to consider the observable aspects of lived religion along with the unobservable convictions and conventions that make such differences in the significance of those observable events. Performance has a long and distinguished history as a metaphor in the interpretive academic disciplines. Kelly Askew (2002) offers a thorough primer on performance, addressing both a linguistic cluster including Hymes (1964), Austin (1965), Searle (1969), Bauman (1977), and Bauman and Briggs (1990) and a troupe engaging enacted social life with leading men Goffman (1959, 1974, and 1980) and Turner (1974 and 1986) supported by Schechner (1985 and 1988), Drewal (1991) and Butler (1997). She helpfully addresses some of the limitations of both the linguistic and theatrical models of performance by anchoring the term firmly in the real world. For her part, Askew argues that performance is “a process actively engaged in by everyone in attendance as opposed to a product somehow owned by performers and transmitted for audience reception,” something “emergent and contingent” with neither beginning nor end, and unambiguously involved in “the active construction of social life” rather than an “occasion to reflect on and perhaps rehearse ‘real’ life.” (2002: 23)

In the case of performance, particularly as applied to religious culture, I think it is important to acknowledge distinctions between my use and common use. In common usage, the term performance often connotes shallow mimicry, deception, or an entertaining diversion. In casual conversation, performance may be conflated with “just acting.” As I

use the term, performance is not necessarily disingenuous or deceptive. It is not necessarily pretending. It is not necessarily a carefully scripted event. It is not necessarily the presentation of a false identity. It may, in fact, be any or all of these things, but it is not limited by them. Turner focuses on moments of intense conflict and the “social dramas” that return communities to stability, but performance also occurs in the long stretches between the deaths of kings and the ritualized transitions from one life stage to another. I follow Askew and Goffman by approaching performance as a constant feature of lived culture. The moments of high drama may be more obvious and therefore more accessible, but I am just as interested in the performances delivered by the bit players, the “man in green suit” and “woman with baby” of daily life. As I use the term, performance is what someone or a group of someones does. It is an expressive act of communication incorporating several components: performer, action, context, and intention. It is participation in lived culture that reveals and revises people’s relationships with each other and the significant features of the world around them.

The performer is the “who” of the performance – Who preached the sermon? Who sang the song? Who shouted or danced? It includes a specific identity – perhaps, Sister Mattie Shannon – and a set of roles – in Sister Mattie’s case a set that includes woman, African American, Christian, Inspirational Choir member, Green Team member, mother, grandmother, alto, and soloist among others. The action is the embodied, physical, or physiological event – the “how” that enacts the “what” of the performance. Many types of action are directly accessible to an empirical examination of the material world. Others are not. It is also the aspect of performance most likely to be overlooked in a rush to interpretation. The action of Sister Mattie as a soloist involves the production of sound. It involves sitting tall in the pew, swaying gently as her voice expands to fill the sanctuary. It might also involve actions not subject to direct observation, possibly making decisions about a key, remembering or inventing a pattern of lyrics, listening to others singing with her, observing the actions of others around her. The performer and the action of a performance are at least partially obvious to most human observers in any given performance. A first-time visitor to Corinthian witnessing the performance of the music that began this chapter would be able to identify Sister Mattie as the performer. She would notice her gender, her age, her race, her intense calm. Even if her more specific social roles and her decision making processes about keys and lyrics might require more experience with the congregation

and Sister Mattie, this visitor would undoubtedly determine from observation and general human experience that she was the one making the sound.

Performers' actions are imbedded in a network of contexts that make them meaningful. They occur in a certain environment defined by physical and cultural parameters, the "where" of the performance. When she rises to read a verse of the Psalms from her seat in the third or fourth pew, or sits swaying gently forward and backward in the eddies of her music, she enacts her performance in the geography of Corinthian. Actions occur in concert with the actions of others, an ensemble that constitutes the "with whom" of the performance. As she shuffles into the sanctuary, greeting people with a wave, a handshake, a hug, or just a moment of eye contact and a smile, she connects with the human others who will contribute to the performance. If she remembers an absent friend or relative who sang this song before her or prays for help or grace before her song, she may experience connection with a broader supportive ensemble as well. Her performance occurs within the perception of others, an audience that constitutes the "for whom" of the performance. In the case of our soloist, she may sing for herself or for others present. She may also shape her performance with a broader audience in mind – the non-human or absent others mentioned above. Finally, a performance occurs in a particular moment, the "when" of performance. Linear time, a specific hour, minute, and second on a particular year and day, matters here. As Sister Mattie waits for the deacons to finish their prayers, scriptures, and songs, she positions her voice in the unspoken liturgical structure of Wednesday night services. Cyclic time – natural seasons, annual religious or community events, or markers of individual life cycles like birth, baptism, marriage, and death – might also influence her performance.

Finally, we come to intention – the unknowable "why" behind performance. My research at Corinthian reveals an extensive but surely not exhaustive list of possible reasons to sing: to worship, to praise, to celebrate, to share one's faith, to uplift others, to be seen, to impress others, to "make a name for oneself," for the joy of singing. During any performance, observers may look for evidence of one motivation or another. After a service at a neighboring church, I approached an older woman who had performed a powerful solo in preparation for Pastor Fuzz's sermon. When I complimented her performance telling her that she brought a powerful message with her song, she replied, "You know what that was? That was G-O-D God." Performers often credit God or the Holy Spirit as the source of

intention or even the actor in powerful performances of preaching, song, or prayer as this woman did, but the community expresses two opinions about the veracity of these claims of divine intention. Individual claims such as this woman's are rarely, if ever, challenged openly; most often, they are affirmed by others. Still, the community accepts as a general principle that not every report of divine inspiration is sincere and that even a sincere report may be inaccurate in some way. Stories of choir members, deacons, and even preachers who cast doubt on their previous performances either by revealing their pretense or by having a public conversion experience years into their ministry reinforce the congregation's awareness of the fallibility of human judgment. Examples of this type demonstrate not only an actor's ability to deceive others, but also the ability of individuals to deceive themselves. They also apply to more mundane sources of intention; even in the moment, one could not fully trust an actor to tell the truth about her intentions and even she could not be confident that she knew the whole truth.

The Power of Jesus

Pastor Enoch Fuzz: We just a plain church
We just a plain old church
Ain't tryin to make a name for ourselves
But I [????] want somebody to know
If they don't call your name
If they don't call my name
If they don't say Corinthian's name
I just want somebody to know the wonderful name of
Congregation: Jesus!
EF: You can forget my name _ just don't forget the name of
Congregation: Jesus!

(Sermon, "Ordinary People," 5 August 2007)

The greatest difference I experience between being at Vanderbilt University and being at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church is not the contrast of race or economic privilege. The greatest difference between the two communities is the pervasive presence of Jesus at Corinthian. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the active role of Jesus at Corinthian before proceeding. A reader need not agree with Corinthian's beliefs about Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit in order to understand this ethnography, but a reader who overlooks their active presence as invisible participants in Corinthian's community will face significant challenges to engaging this community through this text.

Theologians write about ranges of “Christology” between high and low to analyze the ways in which Jesus functions in believers’ worldviews. Denominations and individuals that embody a high Christology emphasize Jesus’s divine nature and his more than mortal attributes. Denominations with a low Christology focus on his humanity and celebrate the lessons that emerge from his teachings and the way his life is portrayed in New Testament scriptures. High or low Christology does not begin to explain Jesus’s role at Corinthian. At Corinthian Jesus is real. God is real. The Holy Ghost is real. Satan is real too. At Vanderbilt and in the broader academic community these statements require modification or qualification; God’s existence is an article of faith which cannot be proved or disproved. But at Corinthian they sing:

Yes God is real – real in my soul.

Yes God is real – for he has touched – and made me whole.

His love for me – is like pure gold.

Yes God is real – for I can feel – him in my soul.

In the academy different Jesuses exist – the “historical Jesus” who lived and taught and died; the Jesus of the Gospels whose divine origin, ministry, and salvific death and resurrection constitute important parts of Christian faith; the Jesus associated with the Christian churches, institutions, and individuals whose actions have had monumental influences on the course of human history for two thousand years. Corinthian has different ways of describing Jesus too, but they preach and pray about a single Jesus who is a mother to the motherless, a lawyer in the courtroom, and a doctor who never lost a patient. I rarely hear about the Holy Spirit in academic settings, but I expect to see and hear evidence of the Holy Ghost almost every week at Corinthian when its presence at the climaxes of worship regularly leads one or two worshipers to shout or shake or dance.

The importance of first hand experience has not diminished since DuBois wrote, “Those who have not thus witnessed the frenzy of a Negro revival in the untouched backwoods of the South can but dimly realize the religious feeling of the slave.” (1903: 120N) The terms, “Negro,” “untouched backwoods,” and “slave” date this passage, but the social fact of segregated worship remains nearly as untouched by a century of history as DuBois’s backwoods. A steadily growing cadre of African American homileticians doubly-fluent in the traditions of academic religious scholarship and the pulpit traditions of their various denominations are being recognized as increasingly important contributors to the academy. Scholarly encounters with a handful of distinguished professors and students may

help demystify some of these religious traditions for their colleagues from other religious backgrounds, but extended participation in a faith community that affirms the unambiguous reality of these persons constitutes an entirely different way of knowing people performing religion.

The prominence of Jesus, the Lord, and the Holy Ghost in this ethnography will probably challenge some academic readers. I ask them to consider that the person of Jesus is at least as real to Corinthian's members as 17th century slavery, 21st century presidential politics, and friends and family separated by death or geographic distance. None of these influences would raise suspicions if they appeared in an ethnography of a community in North Nashville. As important as they undoubtedly are, these historical, political, and personal influences are often much less significant than the influences of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost in the daily lives of individuals and the community of faith that they constitute. These sacred persons are active and publicly acknowledged participants in the performance of daily life at Corinthian. The legacy of slavery matters – some congregants still hold up one finger as they leave worship echoing a gesture used by slaves to indicate they had their master's permission to go to the restroom during worship. President Bush and the senators vying to succeed him appear occasionally as illustrations in sermons and as the beneficiaries of sincere prayers for our nation's leaders. I hear regular reports of news or memories of absent loved ones, and the church remembers its honored dead during annual celebrations. The history of slavery is real; President Bush is real; connections to friends and family are real; but none of them can compete with the relevance of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost in the daily life of this congregation.



*To Enoch Fuzz
With Best Wishes,* 

Figure 11: Pastor Fuzz and President George W. Bush – proof that President Bush is real

Looking to Du Bois, we find that his early 20th-century analysis of the religion of former slaves and their descendants included similar understandings of an active and present God. The uncertainty and relative powerlessness that defined life as slaves fostered a dependence on “a God who sits high and looks down low” that continued to resonate with an emancipated but still politically oppressed and economically depressed population. Trust in a God who hears and answers prayers helped to mitigate the hopelessness of a political system of grandfather clauses and poll taxes, and it continues to offer hope in an era of hanging chads and big-donor politics. Friends, family, and personal circumstances offer cause for celebration and sorrow, but Pastor Fuzz reminds his congregation:

EF: Hold up your head, young lady.

Hold up your head, young man.

You are somebody because you may be plain you may be poor you may be broke but I come to tell you I got a father I got a father ohhhh I got a father yes sir who sits high who

looks down low he guide my feet wherever I go. I may not understand but Ohhhh!!!
Ohhhh I have a father! Ohhhh I have a father!

(Enoch Fuzz sermon "Ordinary People," 5 August 2007)

The fact of an omnipotent omniscient God who has a plan for each person at Corinthian offers a context for creating hope in discouraging circumstances. Despite myriad compelling reasons for despair, the implication of personal significance by association with the supreme power in the universe serves as a necessary and effective counterbalance, a reason to hold up one's head.

This is a congregation that begins worship by thanking God for waking them up in the morning, thanking God that their beds did not become their graves. It is easy to question the authenticity of belief in fundamentalist Christianity from a position of relative safety and security, perhaps because white privilege, good health, and economic stability make it hard to feel lost, hard to understand a need to "be saved." Life as a real or potential target of racism, life in families and communities scarred by the economics and cultural legacy of slavery, the politics of Jim Crow, and their continuing influence into the 21st century casts every small joy as a minor miracle. Survival in these circumstances becomes proof of a God who sustains his people. Thriving in a world seemingly intent on their destruction proves the power and favor of a loving God. That a God with such awesome power would consent to be born, to live, to suffer, and to die a horrible death for the sake of his people is all the more remarkable in a community that experienced more horrors than most in America. Corinthian demonstrates a Christology of extremes – one that embraces the highest possible notion of Jesus's divinity along with his full participation in the greatest depths of human suffering.

The reality of Jesus at Corinthian creates a dissonance in academic writing, especially when belief in Jesus threatens academic values of tolerance, pluralism, and empiricism. As someone who has been fortunate enough to be welcomed in both worlds, I am alternately amused and dismayed by the ways fundamentalists of both camps misunderstand the other – often echoing the other's arguments in support of different but equally absolute values. Pluralism is, in its own way, as exclusionary as a Christianity that posits Jesus as the only hope for salvation. The primary difference between the two philosophies is not one of good and evil or enlightenment and condemnation but simply different core beliefs that structure their believers' performances, especially in relation to non-believers. While pluralism

welcomes many beliefs, it is not all inclusive; it necessarily excludes those systems that reject its core belief in inclusiveness. Consequently, its adherents often describe exclusivity in moral terms and work to spread their pluralistic beliefs to others, believing that converting others to tolerance from intolerance will benefit the converted and the world at large. This performance of proselytizing pluralism is strikingly similar to Christian evangelism that acts to introduce others to Jesus because of sincere belief that the eternal salvation of an unsaved soul and the opportunity for that person to experience the transformative love of Jesus hangs in the balance. In his analysis of religious language, Jeff Titon attends to the fundamentally different understandings of religious language that result from belief or unbelief:

Language in religious practice, then, brings into being or activates the relationship between the worshiper and the divine. For the unbeliever, outside of the convention of worship, it brings nothing into being; it is empty, nonsense or a delusion... The “power” is in the belief; it is the power of faith, and for the believer it makes religious language meaningful and operative. (1988: 207)

Titon’s characterization certainly holds for many circumstances when the believer’s performance of language (or any other deeply significant action) is truly insignificant to the “unbeliever.” Many people without strong ties to the Chicago Cubs or, until recently, the Boston Red Sox probably reacted with amusement to the “empty” rituals intended to reverse the curse that supposedly kept these teams from reaching and winning the World Series. Prayer, rally-caps, unwashed socks, and other forms of faith-based fan intervention are generally perceived as relatively insignificant actions by unbelievers in the curse. However, when Cubs fans turn their curse-breaking attention on the goat whose ejection from Wrigley Field in 1945 provoked the curse; or when your therapist vows to abstain from bathing during the playoffs, then believers’ actions become significant even for “unbelievers.” This is because everyone believes something. Many supporters of animal rights believe that the health, safety, and dignity of Chicago’s goats is more important than the post-season performance of Chicago’s Cubs. Many patients paying for counseling would lose necessary faith in the competency or rationalism of a therapist who violated standard hygiene practices to conform to superstitions intended to influence a leisure activity. When we use terms like unbeliever and disbelief, we do so with regard to a particular set of beliefs, not in an absolute sense. In order to function a person must believe in himself, that is, believe that he exists, and believe basic propositions about the world around him. A true nonbeliever would be

wholly unable to make sense of the world. He would have no understanding of cause and effect. He would be incapable of expressing or even experiencing himself.

Conflict between systems of belief occur not because one group believes and the other does not believe, but because their differing beliefs make the same actions significant in dramatically different ways. When a believer in salvation-only-through-Christ and a believer in scientific-rationalism-as-the-only-source-of-truth try to have a conversation about fundamental aspects of the human experience, they are almost certain to encounter difficulty, not because the statements of one seem empty to the other, but because they are so full of dangerous significance. The passion with which one group responds to the statements of the other suggests that in addition to the “believers” and “unbelievers” that Titon mentions there are also *different-believers*, people whose belief imbues others’ performances with significance and “power” that may be very different from what the performer intended to evoke.

Writing about the performances of one community of believers for an audience of different-believers requires me to state some of the beliefs that structure *my* performance as the author. I believe that my friends at Corinthian are sincere when they speak about their experiences of Jesus, the Lord, and the Holy Ghost. I believe that people’s belief or unbelief in Corinthian’s Jesus has a powerful impact on their encounters with other believers and unbelievers. I believe that belief or unbelief in Corinthian’s Jesus has almost no impact on a reader’s ability to consider the way that Corinthian’s belief influences individual and collective performance at Corinthian. I treat shared belief in a God who sits high and looks down low, the power of the blood of Jesus, and the observable presence of the Holy Ghost in worship as facts of life at Corinthian. I do so because good ethnography demands it. Science cannot support or disprove claims about the intentions or spiritual ramifications of the event that brought the universe into being. It cannot detect the presence or absence of an omnipotent omniscient omnipresent God. It cannot change faith; it simply provides new data to be interpreted by believers of all stripes. As an academic author I cannot justify a claim that God is real or that God is not real; such claims are beyond the scope of academic methods. I *can* show how *belief* in Jesus as a real and present savior is fundamentally important to the culture and conduct of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, but only if I take those beliefs seriously and perform my scholarship accordingly.

There *Is* Someone Else

This chapter is an invitation into method and theory, but more than that, it is an invitation to a certain way of reading and listening. Throughout this dissertation, I invite you to be mindful of the people in the background. The foreground – the preacher at the pulpit, the soloist in the music, the individual shouting in the Spirit – claims our attention, but the background invites our inquiry. Revisit the recording that began this chapter. Listen through it. Hear the Music – Sister Mattie Shannon, but also hear the music behind her – a singing congregation, and know that there is music that only she hears – remembered music of a congregation that sang and prayed her into her faith as a child. Hear the Preacher – Pastor Fuzz stomping and singing and calling out to the congregation, and hear the other preacher in the background – Reverend Baugh singing and calling out “Amen...Hallelujah,” but also know that there are preachers that we cannot hear – the pastor who called young Enoch out of the congregation to become a preacher, the voice of Pastor Fuzz in Sister Mattie’s memory, asking her earlier this evening to sing this song in this moment. Hear the Frenzy – Sister Patsy Hereford shouting, and hear the frenzy behind her frenzy – the whole congregation clapping and Reverend Baugh and Deacon Woodruff talking her through to a final sigh, but know that there are other frenzies at work here – a young man accepting Pastor Fuzz’s invitation to join the church. The applause comes, not in response to Sister Mattie’s song, but in response to his silent walk to the front of the sanctuary to join Corinthian’s congregation. Pastor Fuzz asks “Is there someone else?” because he knows that there often is. The first young man is a surprise, even to him. The special music, and the special moment of invitation on a Wednesday night were arranged in anticipation of another young man’s choice to join the church. The shouting comes in response to that other young man rising and stepping forward – a silent performance of faith that serves as a call and a response to the music, a call and a response to the preacher, and a call and a response to his aunt’s frenzied shouting. There is another in the congregation; this dissertation is about finding him and her and them, and learning how the oft overlooked other makes the faithful performance of religion possible.

CHAPTER II

THE CONGREGATION'S PREACHER

The Preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a "boss," an intriguer, an idealist, –all these he is, and ever, too, the centre of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number. The combination of a certain adroitness with deep-seated earnestness, of tact with consummate ability, gave him his preeminence, and helps him maintain it. The type, of course, varies according to time and place, from the West Indies in the sixteenth century to New England in the nineteenth, and from the Mississippi bottoms to cities like New Orleans or New York.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903: 134)

The congregation looms large in Du Bois's description of the preacher. It appears here as "a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number" of which the preacher is the center. Du Bois suggests the congregation through his description of a leader defined by followers, a politician in relationship to constituents, an orator dependent upon an audience, and a boss with subordinates to command. Absent a congregation, Du Bois's preacher becomes a different character – perhaps a frustrated idealist, alone and impotent or an antisocial schemer and conman. This "most unique personality" derives his moral authority and most other forms of power in large part from the consent and support of the congregation. The congregation claims the preacher as their own. They elevate and celebrate their preacher. They demand service from their preacher, defining him through that service. The congregation identifies future preachers in their midst. They nurture these future preachers. The congregation shapes their preachers' ministries through dialogues of cooperation, resistance, suggestions, requests and demands. Within a preacher's congregation and in dealings with outsiders, the presumption that a congregation will follow their pastor gives a preacher extraordinary power to act in the name of the community and with its combined power. While this support gives a preacher freedom to transcend some cultural boundaries, he does so knowing that the congregation and individual congregants may question him, criticize him, or withdraw their support from him based on the actions he takes in their name. As individual preachers become reflections and icons of the congregations in which

they minister, so too is the quality and providence of Du Bois's preacher prescribed and proscribed by Mitchell's "oft overlooked resource," the congregation.

"Who is Pastor Enoch Fuzz?"

Any serious consideration of the preacher at Corinthian begins with Corinthian's pastor, the Reverend Enoch E. Fuzz. Pastor Fuzz is the single most important human being at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, and while there are many other preachers at Corinthian, the church only has one pastor. It seems appropriate to pause for a moment to allow one of those other distinguished preachers, the Reverend Jacqueline Baugh, to introduce her pastor.

Recorded Example 2 – Introduction of Pastor Enoch Fuzz Reverend Jackie Baugh (15 October 2006) Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee

I stand before you today to introduce our pastor
Who's gonna bring us the bread of life today through his words
And I just have a few words to say about pastor reverend enoch fuzz
Who is pastor enoch fuzz?
Some call him the community liaison
Because when the community has a need
They call on him and he will respond
Some call him the singing pastor
Because it's his voice that make a many tear flow
His voice make you shout
His voice make you want to praise the lord
Some call him the burden bearer
Because he's only a phone call away
And you can call him at any time of the hour
Any time of the night
Any time of the morning and the wee hours and he's gonna be right there on time
Some call him the prince of peace
With the soft-spoken character that he is
And the soft voice that he has
But he's always able to get his point across
But my definition of pastor fuzz and what he means to me
E means endurance to the end
N means never giving up the fight and fighting to the end
O is for the opportunity he always finds to glorify god at all times
C is for the commitment he has to the lord and he never never never becomes bored

H is for the humanitarian needs and the efforts that are concerns he has for us
F is for the faithfulness that he has each and every day to the lord to his members to the deacons
and to the community
U is for his undying love for everyone
Z is for the zeal he has for the lord and he's able to hold on to god's unchanging hand
Z is for the zest he has for his church other churches communities as a whole
I just wanted to tell you what pastor enoch fuzz meant to me in a small way
So church today I come to you to present to some and introduce to others
After the choir comes to us with a selection
The reverend pastor enoch fuzz
The pastor of corinthian missionary baptist church
Amen and amen



Figure 12: Rev. Jaqueline Robinson Baugh – one of Corinthian's Associate Ministers

Rev. Baugh's introduction of her pastor says volumes about him, but perhaps not as much as the enthusiastic support from the congregation that punctuates her remarks. She describes a pastor who fits easily into Du Bois's definition of a preacher, and the congregation affirms every phrase. Rev. Jackie describes her pastor as a communicator, a man with a powerful

voice, a committed leader in service to his congregation and his community, a person who serves God unceasingly and tirelessly.

This introduction is a very particular kind of performance, a public proclamation designed to honor Pastor Fuzz and to build anticipation for the sermon. It is, of course, significantly different from the kind of personal introduction that she might perform when introducing Pastor Fuzz to an individual. It is an official introduction, one made with reverence and sincere enthusiasm from the pulpit. She prefaced her introduction of Pastor Fuzz by giving honor to God, the Holy Ghost, the pastor, the clergy, the mothers, the deacons, the ushers, the guests, and the congregation generally, marking this speech as a certain kind of religious performance. Listening to Rev. Baugh or reading the words she spoke gives a stranger the chance to know certain things about Pastor Fuzz, but it also communicates something about Rev. Baugh. Her introduction tells a listener or reader what *she* thinks matters about Pastor Fuzz, and the congregation's enthusiastic response tells the same reader or listener that they agree with her. Rev. Baugh's introduction functions as a sort of shorthand for Pastor Fuzz the preacher – she highlights the features of his personality, life experiences, and habits that identify him as a preacher par excellence. As she does this, the congregation registers its support vocally, affirming not only the truth of Rev. Baugh's statements, but their enthusiasm for those traits and the preacher who embodies them in their minds.

There is obviously more to know about Enoch Fuzz than Rev. Baugh's introduction offers, but her introduction serves its purpose of preparing the congregation to receive their pastor in his capacity as a preacher. She offered this introduction in her role as an associate minister and at Pastor Fuzz's request. Throughout her introduction, a careful listener can hear Pastor Fuzz performing his appreciation for Rev. Baugh's words. From all appearances, Rev. Baugh's introduction of Pastor Fuzz is an authorized, well-received, extremely specialized expression of who Pastor Fuzz is. It is also a spectacular description of Pastor Fuzz as a living version of Du Bois's preacher. The audible congregational affirmation of Rev. Baugh's introduction of Pastor Fuzz as an easily recognizable representative of Du Bois's preacher suggests the continued relevance of that archetype.

As descriptive as Rev. Baugh's introduction is, it does not, on its own, provide the kind of thick description typically employed in ethnography. To approach that level of detail, I need to supplement this brief introduction with more extensive reports of Pastor

Fuzz's life and identity. As anyone who has been charged with providing a formal introduction can attest, an engaging and informative introduction is a difficult thing to create. Such an introduction is, after all, a public interpretation of an extended and almost infinitely complex performance – a human life lived.

Performing a Life

In a particularly charming passage of *Interpretation of Culture* (1973), Clifford Geertz describes Gilbert Ryle's analysis of various interpretations of a performance that literally occurs in the wink of a hypothetical eye. He takes the imagined closing and opening of one eye and considers the potential significances of this performance in a variety of contexts. It becomes an involuntary twitch, then a conspiratorial gesture, then a mocking pantomime of a conspiratorial gesture detected, then a private rehearsal of a wink in a mirror. In my experience, it then becomes, almost without fail, a sympathetic response in my right eye.

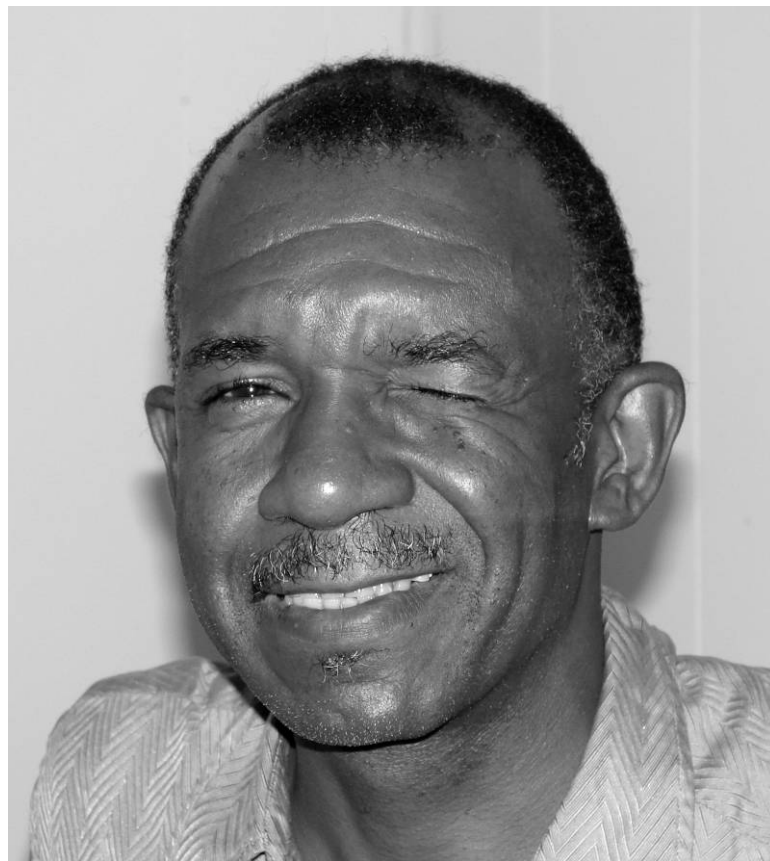


Figure 13: Pastor Enoch Fuzz

Even after several pages, neither Ryle's nor Geertz's analysis exhaust the possible categories of context and meaning. Of course, Geertz and Ryle know that their list omits many other possible meanings of an eye closed and opened and that no wink ever winked meant everything their lists suggest it could. Someone randomly ascribing a meaning from Ryle's list to a particular wink would probably misinterpret the gesture, and if, by chance, the meaning exactly matched the winker's intent, no one could really know. By playing with the confounding multiplicity and uncertainty of meanings surrounding a wink, Ryle and Geertz remind readers that an interpretation of any bit of human culture is, at best, a reasonably-well-informed guess.

If a wink occupies the microscopic edge of a spectrum of performance, then a human life sits somewhere toward the macroscopic limit. The infinity of variables make it impossible to apply the same treatment on the macroscopic end of that continuum. Geertz seems to offer Ryle's list of situations and significances to the closing and opening of an eye in order to demonstrate not only the importance of thick contextual description but also the futility of attempting definitive explanations of more elaborate performances. The complete performance of an average human life would take a lifetime to observe and document. It would provide an unimaginable quantity of data requiring several more lifetimes for analysis. Such an approach to knowing a person makes for a prohibitively impractical and inefficient research method. Despite the epistemological and ontological challenges posed by real life, the more complicated performances still matter. The impossibility of analyzing a full performance of a human life in the same way that Ryle dissects a wink does not prevent us from considering the meaning of a life lived. Indeed, we all engage in this type of analysis every time we meet a stranger. We introduce ourselves by interpreting our life for her. We synthesize the stranger's verbal account of herself with the non-verbal cues she presents, winks and all, and imagine who she *really* is. We do this consciously and unconsciously with varying levels of skill and accuracy.

Performing and interpreting identities is particularly challenging in the contexts presented by ethnographic field research and writing. The differences of culture and life experience that make ethnology potentially valuable create exponentially greater opportunities for misunderstanding than a person would encounter in more familiar settings. More than once Pastor Fuzz told me about unnamed congregation members or visitors who suspected that I was an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigations sent to infiltrate

Corinthian. For the record, I am not an FBI agent. Nevertheless, when confronted by a young white man whose only job seemed to be studying and recording an African American church with a politically and socially active pastor, some people reasonably concluded that I was an agent of the federal government. When Pastor Fuzz first mentioned these comments to me, I found myself paralyzed by the overwhelming probability of misunderstanding. Anything that I might do to try to perform my non-agent status would reinforce suspicions that I *am* a secret agent. Had I followed my ethnographic urge to find and interview these suspicious individuals to learn more about their life experiences, I probably would have reinforced their suspicions about me. After all, that is exactly what I think I would do if I *was* a secret agent.

The challenges associated with introducing Pastor Fuzz for this ethnography involve the same ones we face in any introduction compounded by the mismatched assumptions that occasionally cast an ethnomusicologist as a G-man. Like Rev. Baugh, I could only “tell you what Pastor Enoch Fuzz meant to me in a small way.” My introduction would be similarly selective. I might describe him as a lean, reedy man with an easy, inviting smile. I might describe the contrasting timbres of his voice ranging from his soft, warm conversational tone to the clear trumpeting calls that he releases in his singing and preaching. I might offer a photograph, an artistic black and white shot, perhaps one that shows the lids of one eye contracting. Whatever I might provide would be as easy to misunderstand as my presence at Corinthian. Without the full story, it is easy to deliberately or unintentionally create confusion by filling in the blanks with assumptions that lead to false conclusions. Given the impossibility of telling everything about Pastor Fuzz and the problems inherent in telling too little or about him, I turn, as many ethnographers do, to the life story as a valid middle-ground solution for representing just who Pastor Fuzz is.

In this context, the life story serves as an elegant compromise between the unsatisfying and unreliable third-person account of a life and the unwieldy and ultimately unknowable gestalt of that life. Following in the practice of other ethnographers, especially Jeff Titon, I turn to the severely abridged version of the life lived – the life remembered and reported. Any reperformance of a life as a narrative creates distortions as it reduces decades to minutes or hours and selectively reports a creative interpretation of the meaningful moments of a person’s life. This reduction and transformation cannot be avoided. However, when that performance comes from the mind and voice of the person who lived

that life, the distortion becomes a useful one; it highlights and interprets significant events from a perspective that has been shaped by those events. The truncated and interpreted version of a life also necessarily obliterates some details and invents others through the processes of remembering and the narrator's desire to tell a good story or portray himself in a certain way. It is similar in many ways to the ethnographer's thick description with the added benefit of substituting in large part the narrator's biases for those of the ethnographer. Jeff Todd Titon's work offers a thoughtful system for classifying these narrated lives that considers the various influences on their production.

Although one cannot expect to find Titon's terms – life story, life history, and biography – used consistently outside his own work, the questions he raises about the performance of lives as narratives serve as productive lines of inquiry into any account of a life. He distinguishes the various types of published narratives primarily by the extent to which they are co-authored. A life story – such as the 30-minute account provided by Bro. John Sherfey in response to a single question from Titon (1988: 412)– involves little or no editing. It emerges fully formed from the mouth of the narrator. In this case, Sherfey performed his life story without interruption. Titon, his question, and his role as an ethnographer certainly formed important parts of the context and undoubtedly influenced Sherfey's performance, but Sherfey's narration of his life offers an unusually self-contained performance of a life story. Even Titon's transcription of Sherfey's words for inclusion in the text subtracts very little of Sherfey from the narrative and adds even less of Titon. We lose some details of Sherfey's timing, vocal emphasis, and non-verbal cues, but his narrative structure and diction remain unaltered. Contrast this with Titon's published life history of Rev. C.L. Franklin in *Give Me This Mountain* (1989). In this case, Titon positions himself as the editor of a volume which includes Titon's transcriptions of many of Franklin's sermons in addition to his life history. Titon's role as editor included piecing a coherent narrative together from hours of recorded interviews. The words, and stories are Franklin's, but Titon's participates more directly in eliciting and structuring this history. In his introduction to C.L. Franklin's life history, Titon notes:

I edited Franklin's life history from some thirty hours of tape-recorded conversations we had in 1976, 1977, and 1978... I removed most of my questions and comments, except those that seemed unusually leading... Where friends and family members' statements amplified or contextualized Franklin's, I included them in endnotes. Occasionally I put in a clarifying word, and I took out false starts and repetitions; but, as Franklin spoke

deliberately, I scarcely had to change anything he said. I showed him a draft of the life history in 1979; he made some minor corrections and then approved it. His daughter Erma, reading it some years later, said she could hear his voice throughout. (1989: 1)

This life history blends features of Sherfey's life story with more traditional biographies like Nick Salvatore's *Singing in a Strange Land* (2005) that relied on Titon's recorded interviews and a wide variety of other historical sources to explore the life and historical significance of Rev. Franklin. Notice how Titon repeatedly calls our attention to Franklin's authoritative voice in his life history. Titon calls his culling of 30 hours of recorded conversations into 43 pages of text "editing." He makes readers aware of his roles as a copy-editor by explaining that Franklin's deliberate style of speech left little need for editorial intervention. He cites Franklin's correction and subsequent approval of the document, as well as Franklin's daughter Erma's assessment that Franklin's voice is discernable throughout the text. Other comments from friends and family that elaborate on the context or offer different perspectives on Franklin's story are included as endnotes that are unlikely to disrupt the continuity of Franklin's recompiled voice. Titon even omits most of his questions, features that he would undoubtedly include in transcriptions of his interviews, even in a tightly abridged format. His intent here is clear – the production of a life story that might have been. Had Franklin been so inclined, he might have told his story the way that Titon writes it.

During my research at Corinthian, I sat with Pastor Fuzz several times listening to him tell stories from his life. Some of these occasions were formal interviews that I initiated. Others came in the course of his pastoral role through stories told from the pulpit. Still others involved the occasional personal revelations that occur in more ordinary interactions between friends. The personal narratives that made it into this text conform to the Pastor Fuzz that I came to know through the pastoral and personal interactions, but they are selected from recordings made during formal interviews in which I asked Pastor Fuzz to tell the story of his life. As an ethnographer and not a preacher, delivering an introduction in print and not from the pulpit, my presentation of Pastor Fuzz takes a different form than did Rev. Baugh's. Over the course of several months in 2007, Pastor Fuzz narrated his life with me serving as a witness and recorder. Pastor Fuzz's account is neither as tightly packaged as Bro. Sherfey's nor as diffuse as Rev. Franklin's. As we consider what it means to be a preacher at Corinthian in the early 21st century, let us turn to an edited and annotated

transcription of Pastor Fuzz's narration of his early life, an account that includes his transition from Enoch to Pastor Fuzz.

From Enoch to Pastor Fuzz – A Preacher's Tale¹

Pastor Enoch Fuzz: I was in the choir. Mostly what I did there² was to be in the choir. Of course, we did all the youth programs and stuff. So, church and school were the primary activities for me. At home - strangely enough, even with these 12 brothers and sisters and all of us growing up [knocking on the door] in the same house – I was a loner. I spent lots of alone time talking to the Lord and dreaming of a better life. It may have been that everyone else was two years older or two years younger than me.

[*EF leaves to answer a second knock at the door*]

EF: Sorry Jeff.

JS: That's alright. I knew who I was dealing with when I started.

EF: That's why I can't come here very much. I can't get anything done.

In the choir at that church was my main activity. There and school...

From 1961 through '69, I attended Collierville Elementary School. This was on Byhalia Road. That was the road that led to my dad's church down in Mississippi also. Now, Collierville Elementary School was a school I remember had 35 rooms. Hmm. It was wooden – from first through eighth grade. At the end of 8th grade - our feeder school had been Mount Pisgah High School, and all of my older brothers and sisters went there – but by the time I finished 8th grade – what would that have been, 1969? – integration took full force. So, a lot of the African American schools were closed. I think they all were closed. The black schools were closed, and those students were integrated into the Collierville High School which had been predominantly white, and my neighborhood was zoned to Germantown High School.

Now I was telling you that, even though there were 12 people growing up in the family, for some reason I was always a loner. I do remember us sometimes playing baseball in the evenings, but I remember more vividly my playing basketball alone. But let me see. My younger brothers were two years younger than me. The brothers were two years. I had a sister who was a year and a half, and my next brother would have been over two years younger. That could have been a factor. My older brother, the one next to me, did not live with us – he lived with my play aunt who put me on the mourners' bench – a Miss Emma who is found often in the life journey of this preacher. So, the next person to him would have been sisters and then much older brothers. And

¹ Since this transcription is based on a private interview rather than a more public performance, I chose to edit it more freely than I do sermons or prayers. I gave Pastor Fuzz an opportunity to review this transcription for errors in his telling or in my transcription. I incorporated his corrections seamlessly when they did not fundamentally alter the original performance. I use footnotes to communicate corrections and annotations that could not easily be grafted into the original performance. Those that are prefaced by the initials, "EF," should be read as direct transcriptions of Pastor Fuzz's comments and annotations from the earlier draft.

² EF: Wright's Chapel Baptist Church in Fayette County, a small scenic country church, one of thousands of country Black Churches led by amazing men like Du Bois's Black Preacher.

I wonder what happened that always caused me to be out in the fields and pastures and stuff kind of by myself. That's what I remember more. Mostly that I was really doing everything alone. Even working — the years that I worked on the farm — now there were times that we picked cotton and chopped cotton, and that was the group, but even at those times I was daydreaming about the future.

In these first several minutes, Pastor Fuzz describes his past and present selves as loners in relationship to crowds. The young Enoch is one of twelve children who spends his time working and dreaming alone. The elder Pastor Fuzz is a single pastor who comments good naturedly about the way that people press in on him in public.

EF: In elementary school — the most vivid memory of the elementary school, of course lots of them — I think we did learn. But I think the thing that I remember the most was Miss Williams³ in second grade. I went to her to ask for a pencil that I did not have a pencil. And she didn't reply. She grabbed the fan belt. You know a fan belt?

JS: Like from a...

EF: Like from an automobile?

JS: ...window fan?

EF: Yeah a window fan belt. She grabbed a fan belt and just started violently beating me. And I guess that was to teach me a lesson about always having a pencil. But that didn't teach me that lesson, but made me feel very hostile toward people who do that. I always felt that was wrong.

I did organize, in elementary school, a protest. I think that was in 7th or 8th grade. Because the bus would pick us up, and it would pick us up at 7:00 — we were the first ones it picked up. Well, when we would come home, it would drop us off last. Okay? It would go backwards, but it was really simple for it to go where we would be the first ones to get off, and I felt like we should be. I organized a protest with the principal and the bus driver, and — yay — we won. That the bus would pick us up first and drop us off first. And the difference was that we would get home at 3:00 rather than after 4:00. I remember that little protest.

JS: How did you come up with the idea of a protest?

EF: I don't know that I called it "protest" back then. It may have just been I didn't think that was right or fair that we would be the first ones picked up and the last ones dropped off. There was nothing different about the route — he would just go the same way he would come in the mornings when he would begin the route then in the evenings do that same thing. I never understood why the bus driver didn't do that. And I remember my bus driver — Mr. George Irvin. He was a very good man. It was interesting that all of these people who we had in elementary school - we knew them in community. They were members of the different churches in the

³ "Miss Williams" is a pseudonym. Although I do not generally use pseudonyms in this ethnography, Pastor Fuzz and I agreed not to publish her name in association with a minimally contextualized incident of corporal punishment that might reasonably be labeled as abuse according to current standards. This seems to be consistent with Pastor Fuzz's general treatment of this incident. When he uses this event as an illustration in sermons, he is uniformly charitable in his description of her motives and the standards of the time and place in which this event occurred.

community that we'd fellowship with, and get to see them as deacons and see them in the church environment too and outside of the school.

As Pastor Fuzz continues his narrative, he turns to focus on a couple of themes that resonate with his adult ministry – public education and simple, practical solutions to situations of injustice. He also performs his tendency to be supportive and generous toward people even while being critical of their actions. Mr. George Irvin's bus route was not right, but he was "a very good man," and although he "always felt that [it] was wrong" for Miss Williams to beat him with a fan belt, he does not criticize or condemn her.

EF: When integration came, I ended up at Germantown High School. Back then I thought of Germantown High School as being 1400 students and one-third African American. I don't know how I got those numbers, because in later years I began to think about that and wonder if that was really real. Again, I was there separate from my family. I lost all of the elementary school relations. We were one of the few families who had gone to Collierville Elementary who ended up at Germantown. There may have been three or four families. I think Sterling came, and he's the only one that I can really think of – Sterling Marshall – and I remember him because his sister's here. I hear from him from time to time. But all the others seemed to come from schools closer to Germantown – like Hickory Hill where Dr. Richardson is from, and there was another place called Bridgewater – and those people had been going to the African American school in Germantown which was called Nashoba. It was closed, so all those people went to Germantown High School.

Germantown High School was probably one of the best high schools in the state for academia. I can really say that I learned. I give them credit for any academic successes I had. When I came to Nashville and was finally at American Baptist, I noted that I was ahead of my peers – I realized that in later years. I did appreciate my 11th grade English teacher because she spent time on the Harlem Renaissance and things like that. That's where I learned those things. Lots of exposure and opportunities came down from that school. But what happened in Germantown was that most of the peer friendships that I had were non-African American. I really didn't have African American friends outside the family until I came to Nashville. In Germantown, my first day there, I remember – the very first day I came to school – these two guys – what are their names... Jones and Smith... Smith⁴ was his last name – they came up to me and they said, "You know, we don't like niggers, but we like you." And it was the weirdest thing, Jeff. For four years, those two guys had my back. They promoted me. Now, I mean, Jones and this guy Smith – no, they said, "We're rednecks and we don't like niggers, but we like you." We were in the same homeroom – they were the two people who were responsible for me being the student council representative for our homeroom. {cellphone buzz} Later I became student council vice president. When I ran for president, I actually lost against... Did Steve beat me? No, Ralph Brotherton. I lost against Ralph, but that was okay. I've been in touch with Ralph and Steve Kahn. Steve was the Vice President. Steve Kahn was a Jewish guy. And all of us worked together

⁴ I have provided "Jones" and "Smith" with pseudonyms at Pastor Fuzz's request.

through high school. I may have been president of the Junior class. I've always tried to piece it together — was I president or vice-president of the junior class?

After I lost the president of student council in my senior year, I did become the president of the Memphis and Shelby County Association of Student Councils. So that was the city-wide movement. And we would meet at the Memphis Board of Education once a month, and that's where I had my first press conference. I put together a race relations conference because that was a real hot topic in that era there. I would say that was in '72-73. I put together a race relations workshop. There were 38 high schools represented in the Memphis and Shelby County Association of Student Councils. Their executive committees of their high school councils would meet every month and were active in the Tennessee Association of Student Councils. And forensics and debate team... Again, just about everyone in those organizations were non-African American. I think Lanny and I were the only African Americans in those groups there. In student council it would be mostly because you got one representative from each class.

As the narrative brings Enoch into high school, it reinforces some of the earlier themes and introduces new ones that help transform him into a preacher. As he tells the story, his cell phone buzzes away, providing a reminder like the earlier knocks on the door that his time and attention are always in demand. Within his narrative, redistricting and integration mark him again as a solitary figure in a crowd — this time as one of the few students from his old school to attend Germantown High School, a school in which most other student leaders were white. Public education appears again, here as both a context for his early work in race-relations and as a foundation for his later success. Here Enoch seems to step out of an African American community into a majority white community in which he stands out in a positive way — a pattern that he repeats regularly as a pastor in Nashville.

EF: I had African American students who protested me once at high school because I wrote an editorial and asked people to calm down. There was a riot that had happened because police had killed this black guy. I wrote an editorial that was in the Germantown paper - that was in my senior year — that said people should calm down and wait until the police had finished their investigation and give them a chance and all that. Black students, they were very angry about that. I would say it was the Motorcycle Queen, Bertha, who got her gang of people together and came and stood around me and said, "If y'all mess with him, you gotta mess with me." {phone rings} She actually turned things around with that. Bertha stopped the gang.

JS: Bertha the Motorcycle Queen? Is that an actual title, or...?

EF: There were these guys from Bridgewater and stuff and they hung out in the courtyard. They'd smoke and all that, and they rode their bikes to school. And Bertha was — They looked up to Bertha — the high schoolers. I had no idea that Bertha liked me. I had no idea that any girl liked me. I spent my high school days organizing stuff — like the school dance, the prom — just about most activities I was involved organizing those. I used that strategy in my adult life to keep girls away. Oh, that's how you do it — just get involved with things and you don't have time for girls. You don't need that.

Bertha the Motorcycle Queen appears here as the quintessential example of an unlikely ally and admirer. Pastor Fuzz describes his younger self as having several of these unexpected and often inexplicable supporters including Bertha, the two self-identified “rednecks” whom he credits with promoting him despite their self-professed dislike for “niggers,” and a variety of figures who appear later in his narrative.



Figure 14: Pastor Fuzz with Councilman Adam Dread at a local elementary school

The adult Pastor Fuzz also garners support from and has friendly and collegial relationships with an extraordinarily broad slice of humanity. He works closely with Nashville councilman Adam Dread, a bawdy former comedian and current attorney and Republican whose recent appearances in the news involved his enthusiastic support for a topless car wash and in an unrelated story, his concern over gun violence around popular nightclubs in Nashville. Pastor Fuzz once explained that he and Adam Dread do not necessarily agree on everything, but because they are both committed to helping their people – Pastor Fuzz’s congregation and Councilman Dread’s constituents – they can work together. He continues to foster a decade-long relationship between theologically

conservative Corinthian and an extremely liberal Universalist Unitarian Church. As he explains it, they were the only white church that agreed to travel to North Nashville in response to his invitation to an interracial worship service on Martin Luther King Day, an event that led him to comment: “The Christians who love Jesus won’t do what Jesus say do, and the Unitarians who the Christians say ain’t going to heaven are doing the things that Jesus say do. I wonder who gets to heaven.” (Interview, 8 May 2007)

EF: That was the one time that African Americans protested. I wanted to go to a college that – then of course, I was ROTC also and I was active in that – but again, mostly everything that I did in high school... the friends were basically non-African American and the organizations that I participated in, like the Tennessee Association of Student Councils, were mostly all white. When I got ready to go to college, the ROTC wanted me to go to Memphis State, and I secured a scholarship that was a full scholarship – ROTC Air Force scholarship – but the obligation was that after four years you were four years in the Air Force. I wasn’t sure that’s what I wanted to do. So my other choice was Christian Brothers College in Memphis. I wanted to choose a school that looked like the world – that wasn’t all black and wasn’t all white. That was the basis of me picking Christian Brothers. Of course, I was 17 and without guidance. Everyone let me do whatever I wanted to do. They thought I was smart and unique, and so there were no counselors and no counseling. I make sure kids today... that I object to what their visions are for themselves to say to them, “Are you sure?” But I chose Christian Brothers, and my goal was political science and politics and law.

My freshman year at Christian Brothers, I was elected the vice president of the Black Student Association - I think it was called the Black Student... Brotherhood or something like that – but it was the Black Student Association. I was elected vice president, and the basketball players were African American – they, Earl – that’s who I remember most – they befriended me, the team did. I remember the first week of school there was the dance for orientation week, and they were dancing in the parking lot. I was actually dancing with a white girl. And this guy at Christian Brothers – that’s Catholic – you know, the Christian Brothers Wine, that’s a Catholic school. I was dancing with a white girl, and there was a guy – they loved to drink beer, those guys, they drank lots of beer – there was a guy – he did not like that. He took great offense, and he came and snatched me and threw me across the parking lot. And Earl, who was a big black guy who played forward on the basketball team, said, “Oh, no! What is this?” He said, “Uh uh. E-Noch, you gonna dance tonight. Now you come on back here.” And he picked up like a limb that was – in my mind I always remember that it was just like a tree as far as I’m concerned - and he said, “Now come on, white boy. Now you want to do something, you come on. Now we figure he’s fixin’ to dance.” I always remember that she and I danced all by ourselves and everybody watched. That was interesting times, as I was learning.

Well the second semester, the president of the Black Student Association resigned, so I became president – I was 18. When I became president, I thought you did things. I always organized stuff. My first meeting I contacted Billy Samuel Kyles, who was president of Operation PUSH in Memphis – Jesse Jackson’s organization - got him to come over and speak to our meeting and had a press conference. Oh man, what’d I do that for? Had that press conference, and in that press

conference the Black Student Association accused the school of racial discrimination. There were no black teachers. There were no Black Studies. There was discrimination in the allotment of financial aid. There were black students who couldn't get financial aid whereas there was this white kid whose family owned the farm that *Gone With The Wind* was filmed on who had financial aid. There may have been a couple other complaints, but anyway, that made the news. The president was in Rome where the Pope was. He cut all that short and rushed back to the crisis at his school.

The next day there were signs — after that showed on the news media — there were signs furling over the school that said, “Damn Niggers. More Financial Aid — More Fuck Off Time.” My dorm room was vandalized. It was torn upside down. People yelled. The black students who were at the meeting said, “Oh man, I'm getting ready to graduate. I can't be a part of this.” So I was actually left alone. I met with the Dean of Men, and he said, “You were such a nice boy, what happened to you? I can't be responsible for your safety here.” I knew that — I was really — At 18 I didn't want to tell anybody in the family what was happening.

As he advances the story into college, conflicts become more dramatic. The prospect of racially motivated violence enters the narrative when Enoch tries to dance with a white girl and later holds a press conference to address the issues of concern to the Black Student Association. In contrast to the simple “yay — we won” that he used to describe the results of his elementary school protest, the more complex outcomes of these encounters, one amusing and one catastrophic, highlight the profound need of a self-described prophetic leader for committed followers. Committed, tree-wielding supporters made it possible for Enoch to dance. Other followers who abandoned him left a “nice boy” desperately alone and justifiably afraid for his safety.

EF: I met this guy, Dwight Montgomery. I don't know how Dwight and I actually got together over that issue, or Vicky — But anyway, we came together and we organized students from the other college campuses, and we formed the Coalition of Black Youth. It was called COBY, and COBY became a very viable movement. It became something like a SNICK in Memphis. Even after I left — They changed the name to Coalition of Benevolent Youth. Dwight Montgomery was another organizer. This was April. My last day at Christian Brothers was April 4th of 1974 — the anniversary of Dr. King's death. Dwight Montgomery and I went to the prayer garden at Christian Brothers, and we had meditation and prayer, and we made a pact that we would dedicate our lives to the ideals and principles that Dr. King died for.

From that move, we founded COBY. We would have meetings and we would organize events at public housing and all things like that — sickle cell stuff. We did church stuff. We had a choir. Yeah, we did — we had a choir, a big choir; we went to Chicago. All of those people who were in COBY — Now I know one lady is a comptroller for Coca Cola. Jewel and Donna. Of course, one guy became a CEO for TVA. Dwight Montgomery is still in Memphis as a social organizer. He's me in Memphis. He continues to organize. He eventually became a pastor himself.

Pastor Fuzz does not name the people who left him alone after the Black Student Association press conference, but he remembers Dwight and Vicky in the creation of COBY, and he acknowledges Jewel and Donna as active participants. As he describes COBY, Pastor Fuzz includes “church stuff” – giving the musical example of the choir – but he also includes other work for social justice and public health as part of a broader mission to advance “the ideals and principles that Dr. King died for.” Other COBY founders and participants go on to succeed in the business world. Dwight, the Enoch who stayed in Memphis, continues to “organize” and becomes a pastor as does, of course, the Enoch who left Memphis.

EF: When I left Memphis – in April of '74 we did the prayer garden thing – well, in December of '74 I was selling some kind of books. Maybe it was Southwestern or Bibles or something like that, but anyway, it was December. I stopped by this guy's house who I didn't know. It was a door-to-door, cold-call selling. This was at night that I was at this guy's house. I remember at one time I had already had a gun pulled on me doing that kind of stuff. I stopped at this guy's house, and I was sitting in his study or the foyer while his wife went to get him. I could tell that he was a minister because I had started my ministry in September of '73.⁵

That was my first month at Christian Brothers – in the dorms, my first time away from home, living away from home permanently. I decided I would read the whole Bible, and I started with the New Testament. Mmm – Boy. I actually began with the Book of Mark, and for some reason I'm thinking that that was the first book in the Bible, but I may have read Matthew and didn't remember it. By the time I got to Mark that night, that's when this overwhelming came over me and in that room, and all of a sudden I just started crying. I'm sitting there reading the Book of Mark and I'm starting to cry. I always remember straightway and straight forward in the Book of Mark. I got up from where I was and went to the window, and the moon was full, and it was dark red, and all I remember saying is, “Okay. I'll go. I'll do it.” I didn't know quite what to do with “I'll go. I'll do it.”

Pastor Fuzz's narration of his call to ministry stands on its own. Even in the telling, it interrupts the story to which he returns later of a stranger who points him toward American Bible College in Nashville. Like the apostles called from their nets and boats, Enoch hears a call and “straightway” answers, “Okay. I'll go. I'll do it.” He started at Christian Brothers in 1973 planning to study political science, politics, and law, but by the middle of September he was looking out his dorm room window at a blood-red moon, responding to a call to an unknown future.

EF: I did tell my friend, Reverend Berryhill, where I'd interned between my high school and college summer in the Mayor's Office of Human Relations – the Human Relations Commission. I'd interned

⁵ At this point, Pastor Fuzz breaks the flow of the narrative to flash back to his first months at Christian Brothers and his call to ministry.

in their office as a volunteer during that summer. Reverend Berryhill was a minister and Rev. James Netters was the director of that office and he was a pastor — maybe the Godfather of the Mega Church, especially from... His is probably the first African American megachurch, and it's in Memphis now. As a matter of fact, I saw somebody yesterday from that church and asked how he was doing and they said, "Great." I actually wrote a paper on his church my senior year at American Baptist. He had been one of the first African Americans to be elected to City Council in Memphis — he and J.O. Patterson. After his term on City Council he had become the executive director of the Mayor's Office of Commission of Race Relations — that was the CRC. It was CRC, so I gotta figure out what that was, but I know Race Relations was something there. I called Rev. Berryhill to tell him, "Hey, Chester, I've been called to be a minister." He said, "Of course you have." Everyone knew it but me.

JS: Was anyone surprised?

EF: Me. Everyone knew but me. And still he didn't tell me what to do, but I do remember this really happening that Sunday when I went to church. I hadn't told anybody at the church, but I was carried into the pastor's study. I always — whenever I go back to that church I look for that sidewalk because — I always know that I was carried into that pastor's study, and I had never gone in the pastor's study before. I didn't even know what I was doing or how I got into that place.

When I went in I told the pastor, Reverend Kinnard, that I had been called to preach, and he said, "Yeah, I know that."

I said, "Okay."

And he said, "This evening we will announce it to the church."

So, that was the fourth Sunday in September. That evening for the evening service, I think it was Women's Day, I was supposed to make the announcement to the church. Well, Reverend Kinnard sent his resignation letter, and he never came back to that church again.

As Pastor Fuzz tells the story, he was the only one surprised by his call to ministry. He describes everyone who heard his "news" as having already known that he was called to be a preacher.

EF: So, from the fourth Sunday in September through April of next year the church was having different ministers come in to preach as they were looking for pastoral candidates. All of those people, they would acknowledge me and my presence in the choir and tell me to "come out of the choir stand, it's time for you to be in the pulpit." I actually preached three or four sermons before I preached my trial sermon for license. Once we found a pastor in April, the first thing he did was to license me. He said, "The first order of business will be to license this young man."

Finally, after feeling a call to ministry, accepting that call, announcing that call, and having it confirmed by the preachers and congregation around him, Enoch Fuzz is called out of the choir stand into the pulpit, beginning his public transformation into a preacher and a pastor.

(Interview, 10 April 2007)

I selected this extended excerpt from several hours of recordings as a fitting introduction to Corinthian's most prominent preacher because it exhibits many of his most notable characteristics in a relatively short time and because it offers a helpful contrast to the equally illustrative pulpit selections provided elsewhere. More significantly, this selection reveals Pastor Fuzz as a premier example of Du Bois's preacher: a leader, politician, orator, "boss," intriguer and idealist encircled by a community. I offer this brief explanation of Pastor Fuzz as the preacher to ground our consideration of how his performance of that role in relation to Corinthian and Nashville reveals relationships between the preacher and the congregation. As I listen to him speak, Pastor Fuzz narrates his early life according to the core features that Du Bois used to define the preacher. He lives that role as I observe him and interact with him in the present. The prominence of *this* preacher in *this* study of *this* congregation illustrates close relationships between preachers and congregations that can be read into ethnographies and biographies in which a particular preacher or Du Bois's abstracted preacher occupy the central role. While Pastor Fuzz probably deserves his own book, he is featured here in service to the congregation – a role he performs every day with great skill and compassion.

The fact that the young Enoch Fuzz of the narrative is a leader demonstrates the importance of that role to the elder Pastor Fuzz. He leads an elementary school protest. He holds press conferences and writes letters to the editor against public opinion in high school. He organizes a protest against unequal opportunity in his year of college. However much he rails against being put in "the politician box," his serial presidencies and vice-presidencies, his strong passion for getting out the vote, and his connections with Nashville's elected and would-be-elected officials makes it hard to fault the people who keep putting him there. He describes many of his acts of leadership, political and otherwise, as natural actions following from simple, even naïve principles. He identifies a feeling that "that's just not right" as the motivation for his bus protest. He explains the origins of the press conference that led to his flight from Christian Brothers with the ironic statement, "When I became president, I thought you did things." His rhetorical question, "What'd I do that for?" prompts the listener to answer silently that he was and still is, like Du Bois's archetype, an idealist. The transition from Enoch Fuzz to Pastor Fuzz includes lessons on the necessary skills of intrigue, another feature of Du Bois's preacher. Although Pastor Fuzz describes young Enoch as a loner, he focuses repeatedly on the supporting characters who facilitated his

ministry. Uncultivated, almost miraculous alliances with “redneck” classmates and a mysterious Motorcycle Queen precede more conventional but still apparently providential friendships with tree-wielding athletes. Stories from after the Christian Brothers press conference demonstrate an awareness of the need for more powerful, committed allies. As the young preacher begins confronting issues with more at stake than classroom elections and college dances he becomes an intriguer out of necessity.

The important roles of the preacher that do not feature prominently in Pastor Fuzz’s narrative of Enoch Fuzz’s early life – the “boss” and the orator – are, not surprisingly, the ones that seem to be least important in the pastor’s current presentation of himself. He is intensely critical of his own preaching. While he occasionally praises other preachers from the pulpit as “the second best preacher” in Nashville (or the world) – second to him – he tends to undervalue his sermons in private conversations. He frequently finds fault and focuses on perceived defects in his preaching even with sermons that provoke enthusiastic congregational participation and approval. He also takes a different approach to being a “boss,” describing himself instead as an organizer. He often contrasts his style of delegating authority with more authoritarian styles employed by pastors of some other congregations, although he freely asserts his prophetic prerogative to intervene in the form and substance of church business.

The story of young Enoch Fuzz as told by Pastor Enoch Fuzz narrates him into existence as a solitary figure in the center of a group of men and women. He grows up alone surrounded by a large family. Integration and accidents of geography place him alone in a new school away from family and former schoolmates. At Christian Brothers he dances literally and figuratively at the center of controversy, first with an anonymous white girl in the midst of a crowd held at bay by a man with a big stick and later with the Dean of Men surrounded by a riotous campus, cut off from family and abandoned by fellow students. This trope of a singular contrarian surrounded by a raging crowd recurs throughout Pastor Fuzz’s narrative even beyond the excerpt provided here. It is one of the more important dynamics that shape relationships between preacher and congregation. A preacher often accepts great personal risk in the course of leading a congregation, counting on the congregation to honor that personal sacrifice with support and assistance in times of need. A well-supported preacher can do things that might otherwise seem to be impossible. A

would-be preacher without a congregation's support becomes a martyr, a cautionary tale, or some other congregation's preacher.

Singular, Central, Separate

This project is not about Pastor Fuzz... but it could be. I mention this here because I have so often needed to remind myself that the congregation and not its pastor is the primary focus of this study. Pastor Fuzz was the most significant single factor in my decision to work at Corinthian, and he has been my most indispensable and influential collaborator on this project. Enoch Fuzz is a gifted communicator who has, as one of his favorite songs proclaims, "Jesus on the main line." He also has Nashville's political and business elites' personal telephone numbers on his cell phone. He crafted a ministerial role at Corinthian that addressed the congregation's expectations that a pastor should baptize the converted, preach the Word of God, visit the sick, and bury the dead. He simultaneously engaged in a ministry to the community-at-large in which he sought to infiltrate the levers of political and economic power in response to Dr. King's ministry and in service to his congregation.



Figure 15: Mayor Bill Purcell speaking at Corinthian's celebration of their 20th Anniversary with Pastor Fuzz



Figure 16: Pastor Fuzz and others with Mayor Richard Fulton (photographer unknown)



Figure 17: Pastor Fuzz eating lunch at Corinthian with Police Chief Ronald Serpass

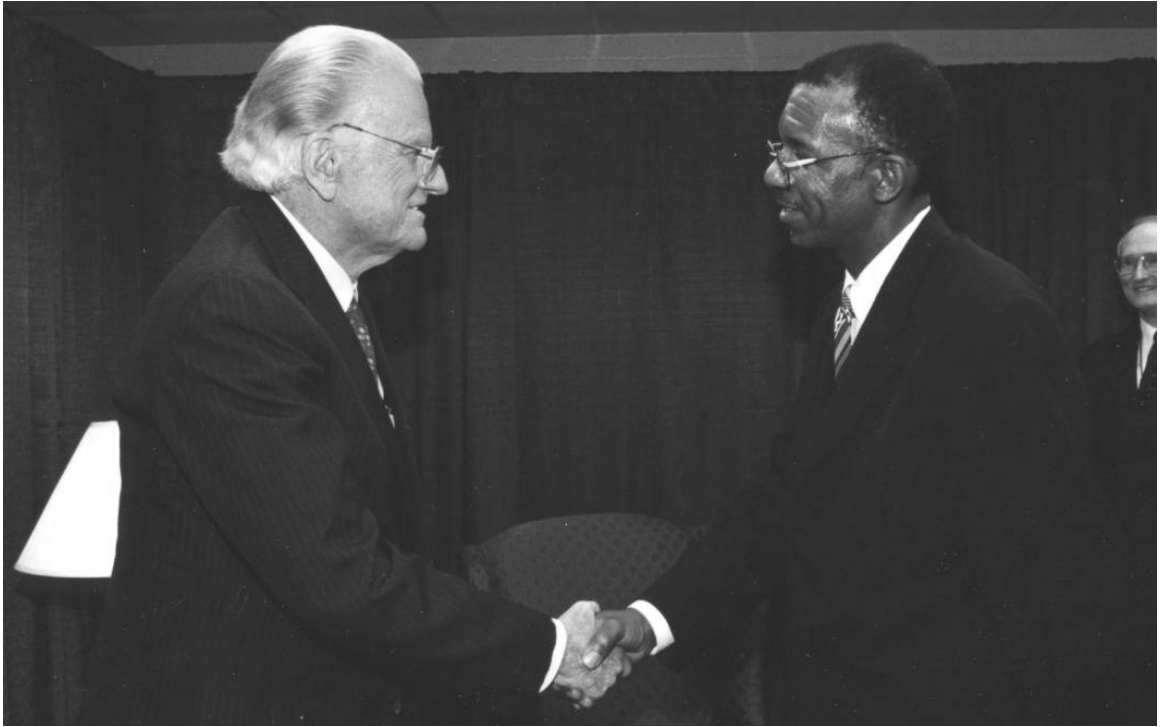


Figure 18: Pastor Fuzz with Rev. Billy Graham at the Billy Graham Crusade in Indianapolis (photographer unknown)



Figure 19: Several Nashville City Council Members honoring Pastor Fuzz on the occasion of his 20th Anniversary at Corinthian

With his considerable charisma and central position in the life and character of the congregation and the city, Pastor Fuzz has always had the potential to overshadow the congregation in this study. I do not think that this is a result of any particular desire for celebrity on the part of Pastor Fuzz. When reviewing an early draft of this document for factual errors, he went so far as to suggest eliminating most references to him from its pages, crossing out “Pastor Fuzz” and replacing it with “the preacher” or “a Black pastor” dozens of times over the course of a few pages. Although he recognizes and often speaks about the human desire for personal recognition, he is equally likely to announce his opinion that, “Only Jesus is worthy of being acknowledged.” When a ministerial colleague stopped in to see Pastor Fuzz during one of our interviews, he dismissed his friend’s admonition to me to make this project “a best seller so my friend will be projected all over the world,” replying quickly, “I just want to be projected to Heaven” before turning the conversation to discuss a job training program for ex-felons. The tendency of the character “Pastor Fuzz” to drift into the foreground of this text reflects his role in the community and at least one significant relationship between the preacher and the congregation – the preacher speaks for the congregation, stands in for the congregation, and stands up for the congregation.

If there is a secret agent at Corinthian, it is their pastor. During his more than 20 years at Corinthian he has managed to blend a ministry tending to the basic physical and spiritual needs of a couple hundred people with a broader faith-based infiltration of the political and economic levers of power in Nashville. He manages to move deftly between communities governed by staunchly conservative and radically liberal theologies, even bringing those communities together on a regular basis. He crosses boundaries of race and privilege. He demands practical, pragmatic, principled solutions to problems, and he gets them from politicians and businesspeople of various races and religious backgrounds. Pastor Fuzz stands in the gap – just about any gap he can find – in ways that confirm and complicate Du Bois’s definition of a preacher and reflect on its interdependence with the congregation.

Pastor Fuzz is the center of the congregation, but he is also separate from them. Other church members and visitors are able to move between roles in the congregation, but Enoch Fuzz is always “the pastor.” His prominence as a singular individual throws the relative anonymity of congregational membership into stark contrast. Pastor Fuzz carries his preeminence with him wherever he goes with the result that he is incapable of stepping out

of his role as the preacher or reintegrating himself into the congregation. There is no “Enoch Fuzz” at Corinthian Baptist Church. Instead, you find “Pastor Fuzz,” “the pastor,” “my pastor,” “our pastor,” or various metaphors for the pastoral role as shepherd, father, or the like. Younger preachers and even elderly associate ministers – some former pastors themselves – have a degree of freedom to fade into the line of ministers across the pulpit or even drift into the congregation. The relationships between Corinthian’s congregation and its associate ministers are shaped simultaneously by history and immediate liturgical function.

During the first year or more of my field research, before his ordination, the young Reverend Gleason Rogers was only occasionally called “Reverend Rogers.” More often, people referred to him as “Reverend Gleason,” “Gleason,” or even “Glee.” Fusing familiar names with formal titles allowed the congregation to mark Gleason Rogers as a young man with a hybrid identity. He was, and to some extent still is, both the enthusiastic, charismatic child of a past that the congregation remembers and the dynamic leader of a future that the congregation anticipates. Similarly, the Reverend Jaymes Mooney, a gifted preacher just out of high school who served as Corinthian’s musician before being called to a more active role in his home church, is sometimes Reverend Mooney and other times Jaymes. The congregation addresses Gleason by his first name more often than they do Jaymes. While this might seem to reflect a greater degree of respect for Rev. Mooney, I think it reflects the congregation’s extended history with Gleason. Gleason grew up at Corinthian while Jaymes Mooney arrived there first as a young musician and later as a guest preacher. Gleason Rogers is “Reverend Rogers” at the pulpit and Corinthian’s favorite son, “Glee” in the fond memories of the people who knew him as a child.



Figure 20 (left): Reverend Gleason Rogers

Figure 21 (right): Reverend Gleason with a student from his Vacation Bible School class



Figure 22: Reverend Rogers preaching



Figure 23: Gleason preaching with enthusiastic support from the choir



Figure 24: Pastor Fuzz and other ministers lay hands on Rev. Gleason Rogers as a part of his ordination

Reverend Jacqueline Baugh and my wife, Kim, are sometimes Reverend Baugh and Reverend Sheehan, sometimes Sisters Baugh and Sheehan, and other times just Jackie and Kim. Kim and Jackie are also more likely to be on a first name basis with the congregation because of the multiple roles they play that complicate their pulpit personae. Kim splits time between the choir and the pulpit, but the congregation also knows her as a professional chaplain at Baptist Hospital where some congregants work and others spend time as patients. Reverend Baugh spends some time with the choir, but she also has responsibilities as the matriarch of a large family in the church and as a foster mother that sometimes call her into the congregation. Rev. Kim and Rev. Jackie are also among the first women to serve as preachers at Corinthian; Pastor Fuzz believes that as recently as the 1980s, the prospect of a female preacher would have been extremely divisive. This may contribute to the older deacons' tendency to be more familiar with these comparatively young women – it is not uncommon to hear Deacon Majors refer to “Sister Baugh” or “Sister Sheehan” before correcting himself to use the title, “Reverend.” These older men undoubtedly have more experience with young men transitioning into preachers than they do with women inhabiting that pastoral role.

Pastor Fuzz is decidedly different. At Corinthian, Enoch Fuzz is almost always called Pastor or Reverend Fuzz. The only regular exceptions occur in relatively private conversations when close friends or peers addressed him as Enoch or just “Fuzz.” Being constantly defined by his pastoral role sets Pastor Fuzz apart from his congregation even as he occupies the central role in the community. This consistency of nomenclature is only one of several ways that the congregation performs Pastor Fuzz's singularly significant role in the church.

Pastor Fuzz is a father, just as Rev. Baugh is a mother and Rev. Croney is a father, but Bethani Fuzz is “the pastor's daughter,” a clearly defined role that sets her apart even from Reverend Baugh's children, grandchildren, and foster children and even places her in a different category than Ebony Croney. Ebony is the charming young daughter of Rev. Eric Croney and Vanessa Croney. She is celebrated by the congregation and often featured as a soloist leading a song of benediction, “Get Right Church and Let's Go Home,” at the end of services, but she does not occupy the same position of attention and concern that Bethani does. When deacons lead prayers that ask God to bless their pastor, they frequently add prayer for “his lovely daughter.” They pray for the clergy, and they would pray for Ebony or

any other child during times of trouble, but “the pastor’s daughter” is an ongoing concern – not because of any defect or particular need on Bethani’s part, but because of her singularly important role in the life of the congregation’s most singularly important individual.



Figure 25: Pastor Fuzz and Bethani Fuzz at a church picnic

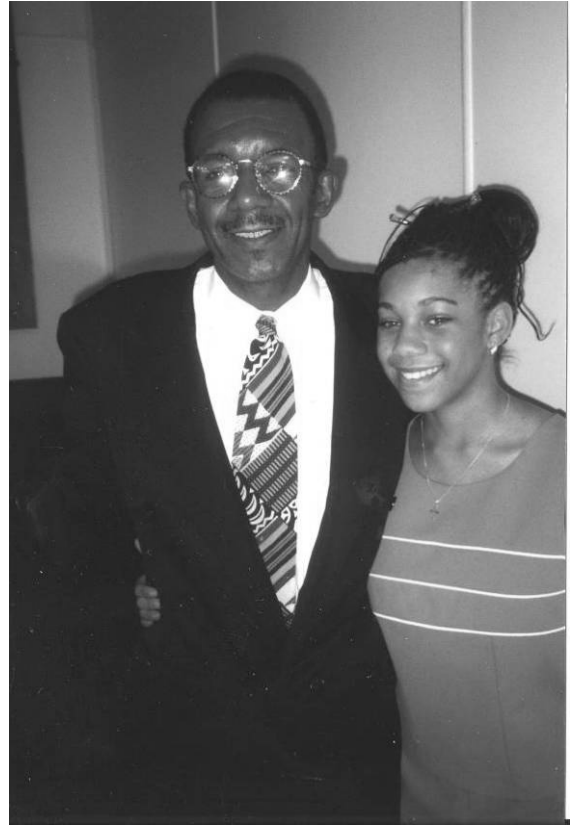


Figure 26 (left): Bethani Fuzz with water guns for the children at the church picnic

Figure 27 (right): Pastor Fuzz and Bethani (photographer unknown)

Pastor Fuzz's mother, Savannah Fuzz, is likewise a uniquely significant individual. Although she is not on Corinthian's mothers board, nor is she on the mothers board of her church in Germantown, Tennessee, many of Corinthian's members call her "Mother Fuzz." When she visits from West Tennessee, she is always acknowledged as an honored guest. Often she responds to her son's request for a song by singing "Old Wooden Church on a Hill," and the congregation always receives her with enthusiasm. The church takes special care to honor Mother Savannah Fuzz and to look after Sister Bethani Fuzz. They are the congregation's mother and the congregation's daughter in ways that other preachers' parents and children are not. They are the pastor's family, and while the congregation has many preachers, they have only one beloved pastor.



Figure 28: Mother Savannah Fuzz singing “Old Wooden Church on a Hill” during a revival service at Corinthian



Figure 29: Pastor Fuzz flanked by his mother and daughter at his 20th Anniversary celebration

The totalizing role of the pastor contrasts directly with the double-consciousness and dual-citizenship that characterizes the members of the congregation. Pastor Fuzz's recollections of Mr. George Irvin as his bus driver and a church leader are typical of the pattern by which the Black Church provided so-called "nobodies" of the ordinary world with opportunities to be somebodies and even respected leaders of somebodies in the churches. The contrast between church-personhood and worldly-personhood differs according to time period and individual circumstances, but the church's function as a space for living out a more fully dignified life denied in the broader world is an important and well-accepted feature of African American religious institutions throughout history. Pastor Fuzz never leaves his preacher role behind. He is never Enoch the bus driver. He is recognized by name and reputation in North Nashville and beyond. His position as a full-time minister at a black church offers him control over his interactions with white individuals and institutions. He has no white bosses. He has no white co-workers. His considerable engagement with white ministerial colleagues and business leaders began, continues, and could conceivably end at his discretion. Even in his narrated youth, his remembered-redneck classmates mark him as somehow different from the people they call "niggers."

As the primary preacher at Corinthian, Pastor Fuzz is set apart from the rest of the congregation, but his life story tells that he was not always a preacher. At one point he was one of a dozen children, a choir member, someone that faded into the background of "nice boys" at Christian Brothers. As he tells his story of his youth, this preacher narrates a journey out of the crowd and into the prominent role he currently performs. He begins as a relative loner, surrounded by family, community members, and church congregations, but with a slightly different perspective from the people around him. This loner becomes a leader in protests against injustice. In September 1973 this leader leaves home alone and answers a call to ministry. That call gets confirmed repeatedly by other preachers and by a series of remarkable events that lead young Enoch to Nashville to become Pastor Fuzz. Along the way, he meets opposition and criticism from surprising sources, and he finds support and assistance from unexpected allies. The life story that Pastor Fuzz tells is the hero's journey of mythology. It is the biography of an Old Testament prophet, an echo of the Gospel-narrated life of Jesus. The excerpt below comes from the same interview from earlier in this chapter. Returning to the door-to-door sales call in a minister's foyer, Pastor

Fuzz describes Enoch's journey to Nashville's American Baptist College and offers a good example of an unexpected, and in this case, unnamed ally.

EF: So, when I finally found American Baptist College, which happened on that night that I was selling those books. It was at this minister's house. His name was Isaiah Rouser. I was there to sell the books to him. I was sitting in his study or foyer or something like that and saw all of his books and they were Bibles and stuff, and I said, "You're a minister, aren't you?"

He said, "I am."

I said, "I'm a minister."

He said, "You are?" He said, "Have you been to school?"

I said, "Wow. You know what, that's the thing I've been wanting to do was to go to a seminary, but I don't even know what that is."

And he said, "Have you heard of American Baptist College in Nashville?"

I said, "No sir."

He said, "Would you be willing to go?"

And I said, "Yeah, I just have to figure out how to get some money to go."

And he said, "Don't worry about money. Just — can you go next week?"

I know from the time that I met him it was like a week or two weeks before I went off to Nashville, and I said, "Sure. I'm ready to go."

And he said, "Well you just get ready to go, and I'll call up and make the arrangements for you."

Maybe the following Saturday after being with him — back then because, in Germantown, Highway 72, I would hitch-hike that highway almost four or five times a week. Hitchhiking was okay back then. That Saturday morning I was hitchhiking and I was thinking about school. Cars were passing by, and I said, "Lord, I really want to go this Bible school. I don't have any money and any way, but you know, I know that you're going to make a way."

And as soon as I said that, this guy in a Volkswagen stopped and he picked me up and said, "I know you, don't I? I know, I saw you on television, didn't I?"

I said, "Okay, I was on Channel 8, the public station." I didn't know they had shown [the Christian Brothers' press conference] on television.

He said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "Well, I'm trying to go to Bible school, but I don't know — I don't have any money or anything."

He said, "Oh, that's wonderful. I'm an atheist, but I do believe there's a higher power." He said, "Do you have time to maybe ride by my office with me?" Oh boy, I must have been nuts — I don't know. I went to his office with him. But I had divine protection, evidently, because when I got to his office he picked up the phone and called back home to his wife and said, "Honey, I've got a young colored boy here with me who's going to go off to Bible school, and I want to help

him, but I left my checkbook and I want you to bring it down to the office for me.” After she came about an hour or so later he wrote a check to American Baptist College for \$500 – that was a whole semester; that’s all it cost back then. Once I was here, he called me once and said, “Listen you’re up there in school. If you get hurt or fall or something, you’re gonna need insurance, and my company has Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and I’m gonna put you on the company insurance. You just take care of yourself up there.” I can’t think of his name now, but he stayed around a long time and we stayed in touch up until recent years. So I came to Nashville.

(Interview, 10 April 2007)

As Pastor Fuzz explains this story, it demonstrates God’s agency in his life, an agency that marks Enoch in a special way. In telling the story, Pastor Fuzz marks himself as someone who does things differently from the people around him. When Pastor Fuzz remembers Enoch alone on the road, he remembers him turning to God faithfully. For someone who has listened to Pastor Fuzz preach and pastor his congregation, this response contrasts strongly with others who make God their last resort.

EF: Well, Aunt Caroline didn’t do like a lot of us.

She did not make God her **last** resort.

But she **made** the **Lord** her first resort.

(Enoch Fuzz “Where is Your Faith?” Recorded 3 June 2007)

Young Enoch and Aunt Caroline both perform their unusual faith in God when Pastor Fuzz tells their stories. In the complete sermon later in this chapter, Pastor Fuzz elaborates on the other places and individuals in which people invest their faith – a list that includes himself – but the heroes in his stories succeed when they put their faith in God.

Pastor Fuzz is not unique in his faithfulness, but the breadth and depth of his performance of that faith sets him apart. He is in some ways the embodiment of every ministry and auxiliary at the church. He compares favorably with the strongest soloists in every style of music at Corinthian. He prays as well as any deacon, and he preaches as well as any preacher, but when someone else is singing, praying, or preaching, he offers the strongest “Amen’s” and the most consistent encouragement. When the choir and congregation gather standing around the communion table for altar prayer, he often kneels like Mother Cross. When guests at revivals perform Christian hip-hop, he exhorts the congregation to encourage them. When visitors and old friends come to Corinthian, he celebrates them. When church members or community members have crises, he tends to their needs and refers their thanks to God. It is the style and quality of his performed reliance on God more than anything else that creates the distinction between Pastor Fuzz and the other congregants. If he was not the pastor, he would be a candidate for the most

valuable member of the choir or the benevolence society or the ushers' board or any other subset of the congregation.

The Maintenance of Preeminence

Pastor Fuzz's most persistent criticism of his own ministry addresses his self-described failure to cultivate his role as a servant in the minds of his congregation and the broader community. Describing his congregation, Pastor Fuzz explained to me:

EF: I think they're offended by their ministers being a servant. They want them to be powerful, and that's what people look up to. That's been my failure, to show by doing that he who is last will be first. To be the servant. To not desire the front seat. To not desire your name. To just serve. And to show that here.

(Interview, 8 May 2007)

Despite that goal, and occasionally because of it, Pastor Fuzz ends up in the front seat of this ethnography. To the extent that I overemphasize Pastor Fuzz in spite of my intended focus on the congregation, I believe I am accurately, if unintentionally, representing the tendencies of Corinthian. The congregation defines the preacher through multiple acts of "lifting him up." Frequently it lifts him up in honor by acknowledging his presence or affirming his proclamations. Other times it lifts him up to put him on a pedestal (or in a box) as Corinthian did by thwarting Pastor Fuzz's attempt at prophetic service as Pastor/Janitor:

EF: But the servant description, I think I failed to do that. I thought I would accomplish it by cleaning the church. That's why I did it. About four years ago, I started... I got rid of the janitors because they were complaining and bickering and stuff. And I knew it only took like four hours a week at the most, and the place is spick and span. That includes washing the walls and stuff. I said, "Okay, maybe that'll show – that if I'll clean the church. Then they'll see that that they can do that."

They were mad that I was cleaning the church. They didn't want to say anything but "You shouldn't be doing that. You're the minister."

I said, "Okay. It's God's place. This is a great thing to do."

Okay, so they said, "But you need to be with the people."

I said, "Well tell the people to come be with me cleaning the church. Two hours every week, I'll be. You know, instead of four hours I can do it in two hours. Come on and you can do that kind of thing."

They didn't catch on to that. I was doing it for free too, and they wouldn't allow that. They just insisted on giving me the money. So I took the money and I took two teenagers. I'd go pick them up on Tuesday and let them come and help. And I would give them seventy five dollars

every month. It would only take them like an hour and a half on Tuesday. They didn't like doing it either. They didn't like those kind of jobs. They thought that was menial. They wanted the CEO-head-of-the-corporation, you know, wearing-a-necktie kind of job. I said, "Wow." So I failed to project the importance of servanthood, you know, being a servant. And I don't know how to get that over except keep on walking some more miles, and maybe they'll do it when I'm dead. They'll know that I was just a servant.

(Interview, 8 May 2007)

Hearing Pastor Fuzz's report, the congregation seems to be more attached to certain markers of his status than he is. Clearly they are also fully capable of enacting their vision of pastoral dignity and preeminence, even when that vision conflicts directly with Pastor Fuzz's goals. Still other times, the congregation can lift up their preacher as a sacrifice or as a human shield as illustrated by the events at Christian Brothers. Du Bois offers a litany of characteristics that help the preacher maintain his preeminence, but Pastor Fuzz's comments suggest that forces other than an individual preacher's skill or will are sometimes sufficient to keep a preacher in a particular box.

This persistent frustration of pastoral intent reveals the congregation at work. The unparalleled power and influence vested in his role by Du Bois and the traditions of the Black Church prevent this individual preacher from altering some fundamental aspects of his relationship to the congregation. The roles that Du Bois ascribes to his preacher: leader, politician, orator, boss, intriguer, idealist, and center of a group of men are remarkable as much for what they contain as what they exclude. Du Bois's list overlaps significantly with a list of "boxes" that Pastor Fuzz reports having tried to escape in the course of his life. In our conversations, Pastor Fuzz repeatedly described being characterized in black and white communities as a politician or a political activist – both terms he rejects in favor of prophet or servant. Some of the roles, specifically leader and idealist, might support a conception of pastor-as-servant, but politician, boss, and intriguer offer strong resistance to that particular interpretation. While some of the resistance may come from an unstated desire by Pastor Fuzz for the recognition and elevated status that he explicitly rejects, it seems clear that the will of the congregation is at work here in a powerful way. The pastor, the preeminent preacher and most singular individual in the congregation, is simultaneously the most powerful and influential individual in the church and the individual in whose life the congregation are most likely to exert their considerable influence.

“Where is Your Faith?”

Du Bois describes his exceptional individual as a leader, a politician, an orator, a boss, an intriguer, and an idealist, but he named him “the Preacher.” Since Du Bois chose to identify his “most unique personality” by his association with the act of preaching, we need to spend some time considering his performance in this central role in order to understand how the context of the preached sermon reveals the cooperative performance of preacher and congregation. Before you read any further, take some time to listen to the recording of “Where is Your Faith?” Use the ethno poetic transcription as a guide, but focus on listening. You should hear Du Bois’s orator utilizing the “combination of a certain adroitness with deep-seated earnestness, of tact with consummate ability [that] gave him his preeminence and helps him maintain it.” (1903: 134)

The following transcription presents one way of hearing this sermon. Low lines () indicate brief pauses in Pastor Fuzz’s delivery. Unindented line breaks indicate longer pauses, and empty lines show extended pauses in his performance. The use of bold type indicates words or syllables emphasized by the preacher through a change in his vocal timbre. The general increase in intensity from a conversational style at the beginning through tuning to full celebration at the end makes it important to recognize that I judged this emphasis in comparison to the overall level of that section of the sermon. An approach that attempted to mark absolute levels of excitement or emphasis would demand such extreme contrast between unaccented passages from the beginning and emphasized phrases in the climax that one or the other would be rendered illegible. After dozens of listenings I still make minor revisions when I revisit the recording. I believe this results from the subtlety of Pastor Fuzz and the congregation’s performance of this sermon and my shifting perspective as a listener. Accordingly, I expect careful listeners to find many small points of disagreement with this published version which I offer as a supplement to the more authoritative audio recording.

Recorded Examples 3 – “Where is Your Faith?”
Pastor Enoch Fuzz (3 June 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(3-4)]

Amen.

Amen.

In the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews...

If you'll toil with us a few moments
Over the sermonic theme

From this text

That reads: “Now faith
Is the substance of things _ hoped for
And the evidence of things not seen.

By faith _ the elders obtained a good report.
Through faith we know that the worlds were _ made by the Word of God.
So that things which are seen _ were not made of things which do appear.”

Where is _ your faith?

We oughta have faith _ in God _ more than we do.
You ought by now to have learned how to trust him.
Look like, by now, more people would know how to _ depend on him.
Seems like to me after all that we've been through _ that more of us _ would have more faith _
than we exhibit.

Faith: the substance of things hoped for. Seems that we got more faith _ in those things that
don't require faith _ than we do in _ that thing _ that makes a way for us.

We' a people of faith.

Faith is what's brought us through.

It ought to be somebody here that remember that there was a time in your life _ when all you
had _ was your faith.

The only answer _ that you had to your struggle, _ the only solution _ that you had to your
problem _ was _ “I know the Lord will make a way.”

The only answer we had many times was just our faith.

Don't forget about _ having faith _ in God.

Many of us have misplaced our faith _ and we've been let down so many times.

Many of us have had our faith _ in the wrong things _ the wrong people _ and those things
have failed us, haven't they?

So I want to remind _ somebody to ask yourself this afternoon, _ “Where is _ my faith?”

Don't bother anybody else.
Keep your hands off your neighbor.
Don't reach over and touch nobody.
Don't you look around and tell anyone anything.
But you focus on yourself _ and say, "Self! _ Where is _ my faith?"
We've had misplaced faith, _ Mitty, and it'll let you down.
Some of you all got your faith _ in Reverend Fuzz.
That ain't no bad place.

But I'm gonna tell you somethin'. You gonna fall flat on your face
Because my days'll run out.

Some of us have had our faith in Bill Clinton, _ didn't we?
Some of us got so much faith _ in the mail man _ that we go stand by the mailbox.
Know he' gonna show up.
Why can't we have that kind of faith _ in God?

Faith is in our heritage.
We are a people of faith.
We sing, "The Faith of Our Fathers"
"The faith of our mothers living still."
We **come** _ this far by faith _ leaning on the Lord.
Now I can't talk for you, but I can talk for me.
That I' **come this far** _ by faith.
It wasn't money that got me here _ because there were **times** that I didn't **have** any money.
Amen.
It wasn't who I knew _ **down here** that got me here, _ because there were **times** that **folk** turned
their **backs on you**.
Some, some, some young women _ I know I'm gonna get an "Amen" right here
Have put their faith _ into some good-looking young boy.
A few **da-aays** later _ anybody here?
Reach over and tell somebody "A few days later."

Some young man who had **all the promise** _ **look one day walking down the street** and **there was**
a 36-26-36 and he done lost his mind.
The Bible says, the Bible says, the Bible says, _ "Young man _ **do not look** _ at a beautiful
woman _ too long."
Don't let your eyes get fixed _ on her.
There go your faith.
Because I come to tell you, _ **Faith** _ will hold you.
Faith will hold up.
But after a while, _ 36- _ 26- _ 36 _ will turn into a 36-36-36.

Where is your faith?

Faith _ is what we need today.
Faith _ in God, _ **not** misplaced faith.
 Let me tell ya, when you got **faith in God**, _ Death can't kill you.
 When you got **faith in God**, _ water can't drown you.
 When you got **faith _ in _ God**, _ **grave** can't hold you.
 When you got **faith _ in _ God**, _ let me tell you, you'll be like that rock'em-sock'em doll.
 Anybody remember? I don't know if they even make 'em anymore.
 The rock'em-_ sock'em doll.
 You know it had a circular bottom.
 Amen. Brother Woodruff had one as a little boy.
 Amen. That was those, that was those old good-time toys.
 Rock'em-sock'em dolls.
 You hit it _ and knock him down _ but he bounce right back up, didn't he?
 When you got **faith in God** you'll be like that old rock'em-sock'em doll.
 Men may **knock you down**, _ but you just bounce right back up.
Circumstances knock you down, _ but you just bounce back up.
 You'll be like that rock'em-sock'em doll when you got **faith _ in God**.
 And I know I'm preaching this because we **sing** "I trust in God." but we're **acting like**
 Oooh, Reverend.
 We wanna _ You know God is the last resort
 Amen.
 When he oughta be **our _ first** resort.
 When you got a **problem that** you can't solve.
 When you got a **question that you can't** answer.
 Listen here, we go calling everybody else.
 Listen here, all you have to do was just call _
 He already answered the question.
 He **already solved** the problem.
 He **already gave you** the answer.
 Have faith _ in God _ rather than all these other things.
 Amen. We have faith _ in the doctor.
 Amen.
 Point is that we'll _ take the doctor's medicine, _ pay the doctor's bills.
 You didn't know that the doctor didn't know what he was talking about?
 He guessin' at you.
Wouldn't you rather have a God who's not guessin'?
A God who knows our frame?
 I'm not telling you "Don't listen to your doctor," _ but what I'm trying to tell you is that you
 oughta have **faith _ in God _** like you got in the doctor's medicine.
 Faith is the soul's mind, eyes, and ears.
 Amen. The eyes of faith let us to see the spiritual world _ and know that it's there.
 The mind of faith is how we understand the invisible world. We know that it's there.
 The ears of faith is how we can hear God's living word _ and know that he's here.

You see, you see, you see, I don't know __ if Moses __ divided the Red Sea __ with a rod.
I don't know if he did that or not.
But the **Bible** says __ that he did.
And I believe __ the Bible __ because the Bible is God's... You see, I **don't know** if Jesus took two
fish __ and five loaves of bread __ and **fed five thousand** men not counting women and
children or not, but the **Bible** says...

Faith __ in God's word.
Faith __ is the first step in salvation.
And all of us need to be saved.
Don't let anybody fool you.
You need to be saved from yourself.
Look in the mirror sometime and think about your life, and don't, don't, you ain't got to let
anybody know about it,
Because the one who, the one who knows, __ Amen. You know, __ and He knows.
You look there. Look at yourself, __ and you ought to know __ that you need __ to be saved.
And that's the first step in being saved is to believe.
Hebrews 11 and 6 said that in order for a man to come to God, __ he must first believe __ that
He is God.
Each day we ought to walk by faith. Every step you take you ought to take it by faith.
Drive your car by faith.
Now I'm not telling you to close your eyes __ and drive down the interstate.
Amen.
Amen. You see, faith is the reason that you' got eyes to see.
Sometimes all I've had to hold on to __ is Faith __ that everything would be alright.
And if you just trust God that everything will be alright, God will obligate himself to you __ to
make it alright.
If you'll **trust Him**, __ that it will **be** alright, __ **God** will **obligate** himself __ to make it alright.
Sometimes Bethani calls me and say, "Daddy, I need you.
I don't have a way to fix it, but, Daddy, I know you can fix it."
And when I know that she's depending on me, I **obligate** myself to make it alright. And that's
how **God does toward His children** __ who will have **faith** in him.
God will, __ and he will not let you down. He will not **fail you**.
I tell you, the **world** will try to **convince** you that **God** will let you down, but he won't fail you.
The Lord **will** make a way somehow.
Yeah, **somehow** is a faith word. **Somehow** __ mean that you don't know how. But **somehow**, __
some way, God'll make a way. Somebody said he may not come when you **want him**, __ but
he'll **show up** __ on time.
Amen. He may not be there **in time**, 'cause God don't operate in time, but he'll **show up** __ **on**
time.
And **whenever God** get there...
You see, God can't ever be late, __ Amen, 'cause he's always there anyway. So it's not that he
shows up, it's just that you **recognize** that he showed up.
He was always there, all the time.
He don't just show up in time, but he shows up on time.

Faith is a window _ in the wall of time that let us look over into the realms of eternity.
In time you're suffering. In time you're struggling. In time _ you don't see your way out.
But through faith you look **over** into eternity _ and you find out that everything is gonna work
out alright.

I can already see it.

I **already see** a better day ahead.

I **already see a brighter day ahead**, because Jesus has said, "If you **trust** me..."

Faith.

A little boy went to Sunday school, and I know it's hard to believe in some of these things as I
close.

A little boy went to Sunday school. He'd been wanting to go and his mother and father didn't go
to Sunday school like a lot of us today.

Amen. We send our children.

But he went to Sunday school and came home from Sunday school and Daddy had been drinkin'.

Daddy said, "Boy, what'd you learn up there in Sunday School?"

And the little boy said, "Well, Daddy, I learned about Moses _ and the Hebrew children."

And the daddy in his drunken stupor said, "Yeah, yeah. I know about Moses. Tell me, what,
what' they tell you about Moses?"

And the little boy said, "Well, uh, Moses _ and the Hebrew children, they were slaves _ in Egypt,
_ and, and, and they wanted to get away. _ And so one night _ they went down to the
river _ and they built a bridge across the river, _ and all of them got over the bridge, _
but then when Pharaoh found out that they'd gotten away, _ he came and tried to come
across the bridge and catch 'em, but Moses an' 'em _

Took some dynamite _ and blew the bridge up, _ and they blew up Pharaoh and all his army."

And the daddy said, "Now, you know what, boy? You not ever goin' up there to that Sunday
school again. That's what they' teachin' you there at Sunday school? You' not goin' there
again."

And the little boy said, "No no, but Daddy, Daddy, that's not really what they said, but if I really
told you what they said, I knew that you wouldn't ever let me go back again."

[*laughter*]

It seems **unbelievable**.

Faith.

Just somebody saying, "Have faith in God." The substance of what we hope for. The evidence of
what we can't see. **That sounds crazy** to us.

But I tell you today that you ought to have **faith _ enough in God _ to learn how** to trust him
_ and to **depend** on him.

Well I'm gonna close, but you know I got to tell my story _ about faith.

Yeah. A modern day story _ that was told a long time ago about Aunt Caroline.

Some of you have heard it, and some of you have not.

But it says that Aunt Caroline _ that she only had one child.

Her husband had been killed in the war.

But she dedicated herself to raising up _ her little girl.

And all of her energy was spent on raising and training up her little girl _ in the fear and the
admonition of the Lord.

And one day the little girl grew up and this mother, she was determined that she was going to _
 provide a way for her child to have a better life.
 And she wanted her to have a college education.
 And so when the little girl graduated from high school, Caroline took the little girl off to college _
 down in Mississippi.
 One day, Aunt Caroline went to the mailbox and there was a letter from the little girl.
 She was so excited about it that she made her way quick _ into the house and sat down in a
 rocking chair, opened up the letter and began to read.
 And while Aunt Caroline read the letter, _ she began to cry.
 Tears ran down her cheeks and _ huge teardrops _ fell from her eyes _ because _ the news in
 the letter was bad news.
 Aunt Caroline found out that her little girl was in trouble _ **down** in college.
 Well, Aunt Caroline had just spent **all** that she **had** to get the little girl enrolled in school.
 And she knew _ and wanted to go and see about her little baby.
 But she didn't **have** any money.
 Well, Aunt Caroline didn't do like a lot of us.
 She did not make God her **last** resort.
 But she **made** the **Lord** her first resort.
 And she **fe-ell** _ **down** on her knees.
 And she went down on her knees and she said,
"Now Lord.
Now Lord.
Lord, well you know I never was able to get an education,
 but **Lord** I wanted my little girl to have a better way.
Now Lord," is what she prayed.
 "Yes, I need you to come on and _ make a way _ out of no way."
 And while Aunt Caroline was down on her knees, the Holy Spirit whispered _ in her ear and said,
 "Caroline, _ go down _ and get on the train. _ I'm gonna _ pay your fare.
 Aunt Caroline didn't question the Lord,
 But she got up from off her knees,
 Packed her bags,
 Made her way down to the train station.
 Yeah. And when she got down there she saw the conductor. The conductor was saying, "All
 aboard. All aboard."
 And they led Aunt Caroline up on the train.
 And it was in the days of Jim Crow and segregation so they led her back in the Colored Section.
 Yes, and Aunt Caroline sat down in a seat and she heard the conductor say one more time, "All
 aboard."
 And he pulled down on the cord and the engineer pulled on the throttle, and the train said,
 "Chug-a-lug. Chug-a-lug. Chug-chug. Chug-a-lug."
 Taking Aunt Caroline _ on to see about her little baby.
 Ain't God alright?
Yeah, well a-a little while later the conductor came down the aisle saying, "Tickets. Tickets. May
 I have your ticket? Tickets please. May I have your ticket?

And when he got down to Aunt **Caroline** he said, "**Ma'am**, may I have your ticket?"
Well Aunt Caroline said, "**Sir**, _ I don't have a ticket, _ but my **father told me** _ he was gonna pay my fare."
Ain't God alright?
Well the conductor said, "Well, Ma'am that's fine. Just tell me what coach _ is your daddy riding on."
Aunt Caroline said, "**Sir**, _ **My Father** _ is on all the coaches.
My Father _ is in the trees out there.
My Father _ is in the locomotive _ of this here train."
Well the conductor said, "**Ma'am**, _ we're gonna have to put you off this train. We can't collect from your father."
And he pulled down on the cord.
And the train stopped.
And they led Aunt **Caroline** _ off to the side.
Well Aunt Caroline went over on the side of the railroad tracks.
And she got back **do-own** _ on her knees.
And she told the Lord, she said, "**Father**
Father
Father

You told me _ you were gonna pay my fare.
You told me _ you were gonna make a way."
Well back up on the train _ the conductor said, "All aboard. All aboard."
And he pulled on the cord.
And the engineer pulled on the throttle.
But that **o-old** train, it would not move.
The train locomotive, it would not go.
The train whistle, it would not blow.

Well,
Hours went by and hours went by.
And they couldn't make the train go.
They couldn't make the train go.
The motor wouldn't go.
The whistle would not blow.

Well I tell you something about the goodness of the Lord.
God always got somebody _ to speak up for you.
God always got somebody _ to put a word in for you.
You see there was an old Negro coachman _ up on the train _ who knew about the goodness of the Lord.
And he said, "Mister Conductor _ and Mister Engineer, I don't want to tell you how to run your business, but I think I **know** _ what's wrong with this here train.

You see that **ooold** woman over yonder, she's got the brakes on, and if you put her back on the train _ everything will be alright."

We-ell, they went over and they got Aunt Caroline and they led her back up on the train.

But ain't God alright.

Look at her this **time**, _ somebody carried her bags.

This **time**, _ they didn't take her in the segregated section, but they took her up in the first class section.

And Aunt Caroline sat down in a plush _ first class seat, folded her little arms, and said, "Thank you, Lord" as she heard the conductor cry out, "All aboard!" pulled down on the cord, engineer pulled on the throttle, and the old train,

Chug-a-lug. Chug-a-lug. Chug-a-lug. Taking Aunt Caroline to see her...

Oh have faith in God.

Have faith in God.

Have I'll trust in God.

I'll trust in God

Wherever I may be.

Ohhh!

[unclear]...on the sea.

[unclear]...from day...

From day unto day.

OOOOOhhhh I'll trust! _

Rev. Gleason Rogers: In the Lord. The doors of the church are open.

As the previous recording demonstrates, the sermonic event unifies the preacher, the music, the frenzy, and the congregation in a way that no other moment can match. At its best it offers a climactic moment in which all four parties are fully engaged, each with the others, in ecstatic celebration. The preacher sings his sermon, the congregation responds in counterpoint. The frenzy builds in voices, bodies, and spirits and the church erupts with weeping, shouting, dancing, and "Hallelujahs!" There are sermons from which these frenzied feedback loops of religious fervor are absent or muted, and there are other events – songs, baptisms, and funerals – that catalyze celebration typical of a sermonic climax. Still, anyone looking for 21st century equivalents of the "awful" – perhaps more appropriately translated from Du Bois's burdened 1903 diction as "awesome" – scenes of slave religion that Du Bois reported in 1903 should plan to arrive at church in time for the sermon. Du Bois offered an important qualification when writing about the performance of slave religion that applies equally to contemporary reports of ecstatic worship. He acknowledged the

problem of representation – while first hand experience of worship inspired awe or terror, descriptions of the same rendered them “grotesque or funny” from Du Bois’s perspective. The change in character from terrible to comical suggests an equally drastic change in content – the substance of the humorous or trivializing accounts is significantly different from the lived experience. This unintentional caricaturing of transcendent worship into textual blackface minstrelsy is only a particularly dramatic example of the problems that face anyone trying to condense lived experience into an authoritative text.

My transcription of “Where is Your Faith” offers a good example of this unavoidable distortion. Like virtually every other sermonic transcription ever made, this one focuses attention on the preacher’s words and, less typically, the preacher’s silence. It offers more information than some might about cadence and emphasis. It gives readers information about times when the preacher is silent, but it does not clearly indicate what, if anything, fills those sonic voids. It also adds features to the sermon that were not present in the original event. Unlike the performed sermon, this transcription exists outside of time – a reader could conceivably dwell on a single word or phrase for days or consume the written text of the sermon in a tenth of time of the live performance. In the form of printed text, it invites comparisons to written genres – newspaper articles, formal letters, books, and memos – rather than oral genres – oratory, myth, storytelling. These misplaced comparisons draw attention to contractions, word choices, and sentence structures that are expected and often desirable in oral genres that suggest ignorance or illiteracy when transferred directly into printed text. Even among oral genres, the black church sermon is unusually improvisatory because it occurs at its best as dialogue rather than monologue. The preacher takes the lead in directing the conversation, but the congregation has their say as well – encouraging and commenting on the preacher’s performance through their own.

Listen again to the first five minutes of “Where is Your Faith,” and you will hear clear examples of the congregation performing its roles as sermonic partner. Compare the transcript of Pastor Fuzz’s preaching with this more complete transcription of the sermonic ensemble – preacher and congregation:

Recorded Example 4 – “Where is Your Faith?” [introduction only]
Pastor Enoch Fuzz & Congregation (3 June 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(3)]

In the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews...

If you'll toil with us a few moments [Alright]
Over the sermonic theme

From this text

That reads: “Now faith [Alright, come on pastor]
Is the substance of things [Oh Lord] hoped for
And the evidence of things not seen.[Yeah.]

By faith _ the elders obtained a good report. [Well]
Through faith we know that the worlds were _ made by the Word of God. [Amen.] [Amen.]
So that things which are seen _ were not made of things which do appear.” [Yes.] [Come on
Reverend.]

Where is _ your faith? [Alright] [Come on Rev.]

We oughta have faith [Yes] in God [That's right] more than we do. [Alright.]
You ought by now to have learned how to trust him. [Yes. Yes.]
Look like, by now, more people _ would know how to _ depend on him. [Alright] [Say that. Say
that, Pastor.]

Seems like to me after all that we've been through [Mmm hmmm.] that more of us _ would have
more faith [Yeah.] [Yes sir.] than we exhibit. [Yes.]

Faith: the substance of things hoped for. [?] Seems that we got more faith _ in those things
that don't require faith [Say that, Pastor.] than we do in _ that thing _ that makes a way
for us. [Alright] [Well, well.]

We' a people of faith. [Amen.] [Amen.]

Faith is what's brought us through. [Well.] [That's right.]

It ought to be somebody here that remember that there was a time in your life _ when all you
had [Alright] [Was faith.] was your faith. [Yeah] [Come on now.]

The only answer _ that you had to your struggle, _ the only solution _ that you had to your
problem _ was [Faith.] “I know the Lord will make a way.” [Yes Sir!] [Yes.]

The only answer we had many times was just our faith. [Amen.] [Faith]

Don't forget about _ having faith [Well] in God. [Amen.]

Many of us have misplaced our faith [Say that. Say that.] and we've been let down so many
times. [Well.] [Yes Sir. Yes Sir.] [Amen. Amen.]

Many of us have had our faith _ in the wrong things [Alright. Alright.] the wrong people
[Alright!] and those things have failed us, haven't they? [Yes.] [All the time. All the time.]
[Come on, Reverend.]

So I want to remind _ somebody to ask yourself this afternoon, _ “Where is [Your faith] [Come on now.] my faith?” [Come on!] [Alright Reverend]
Don’t bother anybody else. [That’s right.] [Alright.]
Keep your hands off your neighbor. [Yes.] [Say that.] [laughing]
Don’t reach over and touch nobody. [laughing][Yeah, Reverend. Watch out, Reverend.]
Don’t you look around and tell anyone anything. [*laughing, cheering*] [Say that.] [Alright.]
But you focus on yourself [Yes. Yes.] and say, “Self! [Yeah.] [Self!] Where is [Where is] [My faith] my faith?” [My faith.] [Come on.]



Figure 30: Rev. Rogers, Rev. Baugh, and others encouraging a preacher during a sermon



Figure 31: Reverend Green affirming a preacher

The exchange between preacher and congregation reveals one reason for all the pauses in the preacher's delivery of the sermon. He uses the silence to invite response. Even in the few minutes at the beginning of this sermon, those responses take many forms. The first one in this selection, "Alright," offers a basic procedural affirmation. It tells the preacher that the congregation is with him, at least for the moment. In this case the congregant consents to cooperate – he *will* toil with the preacher for a few moments. Other times, affirmation demonstrates congregational agreement with a proposition made by the preacher. Look to the "Amen's" and most of the responses during the reading of scripture for good examples of propositional affirmation. Other common responses include commentary, "Watch out, Reverend;" coaching, "Say that.;" and echoing, the repetition of a word or phrase immediately after the preacher. This excerpt also offers moments when congregants fill in the blanks left in the sermon. At this early stage of the sermon, Pastor Fuzz typically follows up with his own response as when he follow's Rev. Gleason's "your faith" with "my faith." Once he gets into celebration toward the end of a sermon he may leave the blank to the congregation to fill as he does in this sermon. Pastor Fuzz's final statement, "00000hhhh I'll trust _ !" ends with a blank that invites the congregation to answer his central question in this sermon, "Where is your faith?"



Figures 32-33: The congregation fully engaged at the end of a sermon

One Pastor, Many Preachers



Figure 34: Several of Corinthian's associate ministers (front row, left to right: Rev. Edward Moore, Rev. Kim Sheehan, Rev. Gleason Rogers; back row left to right: Rev. Dr. Raymond Richardson, Rev. Eric Croney)

Pastor Fuzz is certainly the most central and most complete version of Du Bois's preacher at Corinthian, but he is not the *only* preacher there. In addition to Pastor Fuzz, Corinthian has just over a half-dozen associate ministers and roughly the same number of unaffiliated preachers who visit regularly and occasionally share the pulpit. Associate ministers Rev. Moore and Rev. Minter are older, male, semi-retired ministers a generation older than Pastor Fuzz. Rev. Eric Croney, Rev. Jackie Baugh, and Rev. Dr. Ray Richardson, are closer to Pastor Fuzz's age. The youngest associate ministers are my wife, Rev. Kim Sheehan, and 19-year-old Rev. Gleason Rogers. These seven other preachers combine with Pastor Fuzz to encompass a diversity of style, identity, and experience that challenges any tidy stereotype of the preacher. This group includes full-time, part-time, and retired ministers. It includes ministers educated by seminaries, ministers educated through apprenticeships in the church,

a minister with a Ph.D in mathematics, and a minister in his second year of college. It includes whooping preachers, singing preachers, and preachers who lecture. It includes male and female preachers, and preachers who fit into categories of fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, married, divorced, widowed and single preachers. Pastor Fuzz is *the* pastor, and that may make him the only “Preacher” according to Du Bois’s description of the term, but there are other voices, other faces, and other lives of preachers that the congregation at Corinthian embraces, affirms, and promotes.

While it is not entirely clear to me that these associate ministers qualify as preachers in the way that Du Bois uses the term, I present this mismatch as a challenge to Du Bois’s category rather than as a criticism of Corinthian’s associate ministers. By any conventional use of the term, these associate ministers are undeniably preachers. They are licensed to preach by the congregation. They have been ordained by the congregation. They are received as ministers to preach and celebrate the sacraments of baptism and communion by the congregation. Interestingly enough, Du Bois does not actually mention these religious functions in his description of “the Preacher.” In fact, Du Bois’s description of the preacher as a core feature of Black religion in America avoids religion entirely. This may be a result of Du Bois writing at a time when Black leadership was more completely circumscribed within the churches and before associate ministers became common features of congregations. Du Bois’s preacher is a charismatic leader whose religious context is either irrelevant or simply assumed. The associate ministers, defined in part by their relationship to the singular Pastor Fuzz, are *not* the centers, *not* the preeminent leaders politicians, orators, bosses, intriguers, or idealists. Instead, they are complimentary presences – ministerial specialists who extend the pastor’s reach and ideally share the pastor’s load.

As I write the first draft of this chapter, Pastor Fuzz is on a long-overdue sabbatical from most of his regular duties at Corinthian. In his absence, Rev. Gleason Rogers has been called on to provide the style of highly celebratory sermons that the congregation expects on Sunday mornings. Rev. Moore staffed the pulpit on Wednesday night, preaching to the smaller, generally older subset of the congregation that attends midweek services. Just prior to his sabbatical, Pastor Fuzz called on my wife, Rev. Kim Sheehan, to preach the funeral of a long-time church member. Through these experiences, younger ministers like Kim and Gleason develop the “certain adroiness,” “consummate ability,” and potentially the “preeminence” that Du Bois associates with the preacher. Their service certainly eases the

burden on Pastor Fuzz, but it is also framed explicitly as a learning process that prepares novice ministers for future leadership of their own congregations. Senior, semi-retired ministers like Rev. Moore and Rev. Minter are not preparing for a new pastoral position. When they preach, pray, or otherwise serve in a pastoral capacity, they do so as a part-time continuation of a life of ministry. Likewise, Dr. Richardson, Rev. Baugh, and Rev. Croney seem to play relatively well-developed roles as volunteer ministers. These three associate ministers also learn from their work with the congregation and benefit from Pastor Fuzz's guidance, but their participation in services is almost always understood as a service. This is also true for Rev. Rogers's and Rev. Sheehan's ministerial work, but Pastor Fuzz and other church leaders acknowledged the importance of giving these young preachers experience when describing their participation as worship leaders. Still, regardless of how active the associate ministers become or how long Corinthian's pastor is away from the pulpit, the associate ministers serve as extensions of him. When Pastor Stockard, Pastor Fuzz's predecessor at Corinthian, was ill at the end of his pastorate, Rev. Fuzz performed the pastoral duties as an assistant for several years while Pastor Stockard retained the position of pastor until his death. This recalls the arrangement described by Nick Salvatore by which Rev. C. L. Franklin's assistants would often preach for him toward the end of his life. Franklin still received the love offerings.

“A Sexist Church is Not Christ(ian)”

While it is true that the vast majority of churches (of all races and denominations) in Nashville still rely on men to fill their most senior pastoral positions, the congregation's support of Reverend Jackie Baugh and my wife, Kim, in their roles as preachers and ministers demonstrates that the so-called “stained-glass ceiling” is significantly higher than the clustering of men in prominent positions at Corinthian such as deacons and trustees might suggest. The exchange below, part of a time of questioning at the ordination of Rev. Sheehan and Rev. Rogers, illustrates both the Biblical foundation advanced at Corinthian for a gender-inclusive clergy and, through the enthusiastic congregational response, the community's approval of this reading of scripture.

EF: Kim, some denominations prohibit women in preaching or especially the pastoral ministry. What do you believe about women preachers and pastors?

Rev. Kim Sheehan: I think that first Galatians 3:28 says that in Christ there is no Jew nor Greek [Amen] nor slave nor free nor male nor female for we are all one in Christ Jesus. [That's right] Once we are baptized into the family of faith in Christ all those barriers that seek to divide us, they dissolve in Christ. And so Christ can call anyone because once we're baptized we're all on equal footing with the Lord. [Amen] So Christ can call anyone, women, men, no matter where you come from. And also in Acts it says that in the last days that God will pour out his spirit both on his sons and his daughters [Hallelujah] and even the it says that male and female servants will prophesize, [Mmm] So it is biblically and in scripture, that both men and women will be given the gift of the spirit. [Mmm] [That's right] But I think also another important scripture passage is the scene of the resurrection, the day that Mary and the other Mary go to the tomb find that Christ is risen. [Alright] On the way back Christ appears to the women and he tells them, Go and tell the disciples [Amen] that I have risen [Alright] just as I said. [Alright] So Christ gives [That's right] the first charge [Alright] to these two women to share the [Yes] good news of Jesus Christ's resurrection. [Alright] [A-men] [*Applause*]

The strongest responses in the previous passage came from women's voices, but even the more vocal men, Deacon Woodruff for example, join in towards the end, affirming the charge to share the good news or perhaps simply the good news itself.



Figure 35: Rev. Kim Sheehan being questioned by Rev. Baugh as a part of her ordination



Figure 36: Rev. Rogers and Rev. Sheehan with the congregation behind them during their ordination

This receptivity to women as preachers is relatively new at Corinthian, and some pastors and congregations of nearby churches believe that ordained ministry is an exclusively masculine domain. Toward the end of my field research, shortly after Kim and Gleason's ordination, the first woman ordained at Corinthian returned from Alabama to preach for the Women's Day service. Describing her call to preach, Pastor Fuzz highlighted what he considered the providential timing of the event. As he describes the events, she approached him to report her call to preach shortly after an elderly associate minister – one whom Pastor Fuzz fondly remembers, among other reasons, for dressing in a suit and tie to mow his lawn – had died. According to Pastor Fuzz, this minister did not believe in the ordination of women. Furthermore, Pastor Fuzz suspected that his objection would have caused division, perhaps to the extent of splitting the church if he had been alive when she received her call to ministry. In his absence, however, the congregation responded to Pastor Fuzz's inquiry as to whether they would affirm her call to ministry with what he described as "the loudest 'Amen' [he]d ever heard." The congregation and especially Pastor Fuzz affirm God's ability to call women to ministry. Whether the congregation would welcome a female minister as *their pastor* is not entirely clear, but they affirm their female associate ministers and guest preachers enthusiastically.

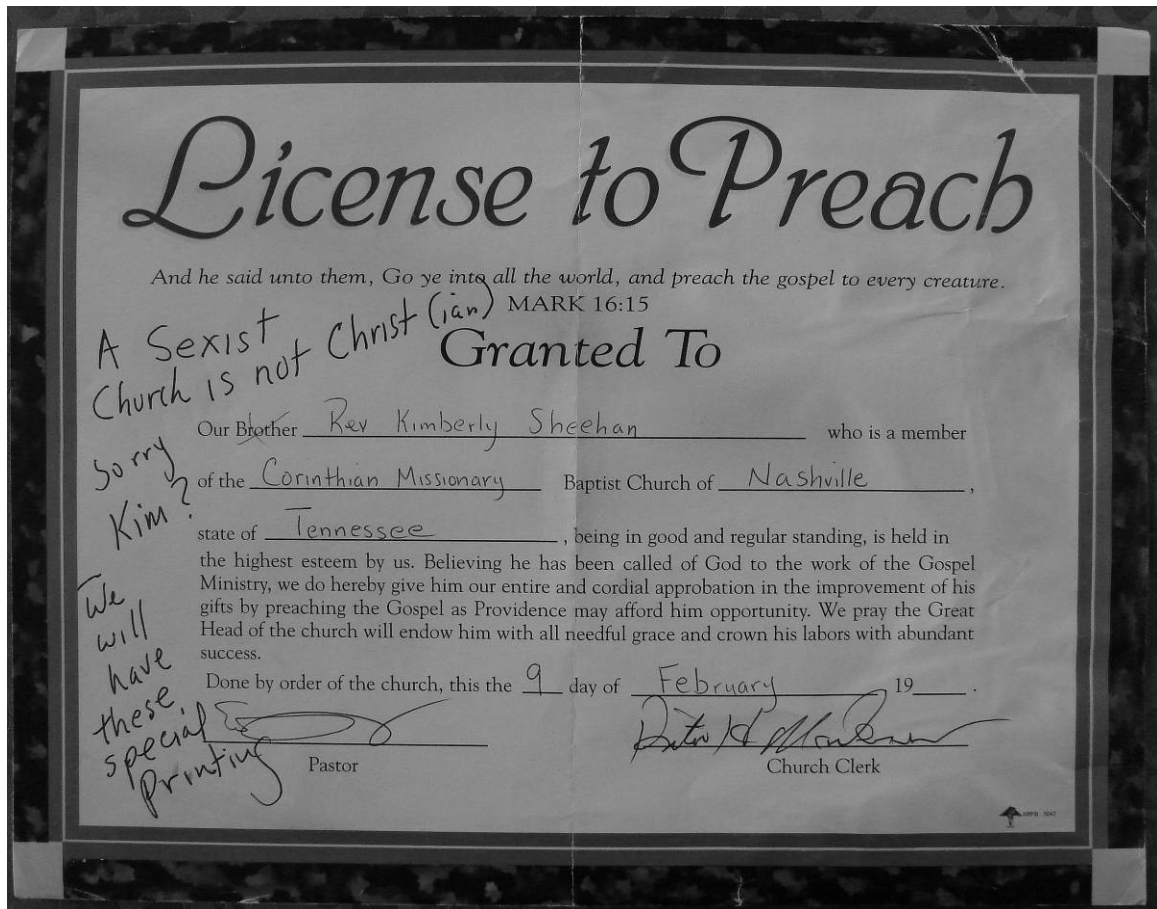


Figure 38: This certificate was almost presented to Rev. Kimberly Sheehan. Pastor Fuzz's written comments on this license to preach document a theological rejection of certain gendered conceptions of pastoral ministry.

My experience at Corinthian does not permit me to write authoritatively on the broader obstacles to women in ministry in the Black Church, the Black Baptist churches, or even the nuanced landscape of risks and rewards for ministry by Rev. Baugh and other women previously engaged in pastoral ministry at Corinthian. The particulars of my observations and experiences support the broader claims of authors like Teresa Fry Brown (2003) and Michael Battle (2006) about the shifting expectations in the intersection of race, gender, and the pulpit. I have had a unique perspective on the congregation and individual congregants' specific support for my wife as first a choir member, then a guest preacher and associate minister, and finally as a candidate for ordination.

Throughout her ministry at Corinthian, Kim has been supported in different but equally important ways by Pastor Fuzz and by the powerful intervention of women and men

in the congregation. Pastor Fuzz often pushes her to expand her pastoral repertory by attempting things outside of her comfort zone – calling her to preach at Corinthian, preside over services, celebrate communion, and recently to preach the eulogy and conduct the grave-side service for a church member. As Pastor Fuzz provides opportunities and instruction, the congregation provides support and encouragement. Sister Patsy Hereford stands out as one of Kim’s most constant supporters. Sister Hereford is the longest serving member of Corinthian’s choirs. When Kim joined the (adult) Inspirational Choir, she took a seat in the soprano section next to Sister Hereford, agreeing to sing what Sister Hereford sang and making a pact to “be wrong together” if Sister Hereford forgot the notes. From that day forward, Sister Hereford has encouraged, supported, and promoted “her Sunshine” – the name she gave Kim. Whenever Kim preaches or performs in any pastoral role, I can expect to hear Sister Hereford’s glowing assessment shortly thereafter. Not surprisingly, Sister Hereford tolerates very little criticism of her Sunshine. Even Pastor Fuzz’s teasing suggestion that he would need to “find a whoop” for Kim earned a sharp response from Sister Hereford who argued with unambiguous conviction that Kim should preach as herself. If Kim started whooping, Sister Hereford worried that she would not know what happened to her Sunshine. Shortly after that exchange, Pastor Fuzz declared Kim’s flute-playing to be an adequate whoop.



Figure 38: Choir members (front row left to right: Elois Outlaw, Kim Shehan, Patsy Hereford, Velva Guthrie, Betty Lane)

Sister Hereford is unique in some of the ways that she performs her support for Kim as a preacher, but her commitment to Kim’s success and her contribution to that success is of a type that can be observed between dozens of preacher-congregant pairs at Corinthian.

Interestingly, the Herefords played an important role in Pastor Fuzz's early development as a guest and then associate minister at Corinthian in the 1970s:

EF: People affirmed me over and over again. Whenever I would preach – I knew those were not good sermons – but they would just affirm you anyway. And they would feed you and care for you. Just received lots of love.

JS: How did they affirm you?

EF: They just always would - whereas at school or in community, "That's a crazy idea." But here, "That's wonderful. You're wonderful. We love you. Come eat with us. I'll pick you up. I'll make sure you got a way to church. What do you need? We wanna help you." Those kinds of things happened here.

JS: Who was doing that?

EF: Lots of people. The Majors, the Flaggs, Deacon Edwards and Mrs. Edwards. Eat at their home. The Herefords. You know the Herefords? Patsy? Well Patsy and Willie. Willie, of course, remembered from my very first sermon. They were the youth choir. Willie and their gang would come to the school on weekends and they'd pick me up, and I would hang out with them. Willie and Darlene and Eddie, and Darrel, and all of them – their dad – they'd come out and get me on the weekends, and Sundays after church I would go to Willie's house to eat Sunday dinner and his mom would have him to drive me around the block several times while she cleaned up his room. So there was a lot of affirmation from all sort of folk here.

(Interview, 10 April 2007)

The Herefords – past, present, and probably future – appear here providing the congregational support that makes a preacher possible. Preachers and congregations are often cast respectively in the roles of caller and responders, but in these cases the responses precede the calls. Pastor Fuzz reports affirmation, "That's wonderful" and "You're wonderful," in response to decidedly sub-wonderful preaching. It is possible that Pastor Fuzz is too critical when he calls his sermons "not good," but his report resonates with my observations of the congregation offering praise and encouragement for novice preachers whose homiletical dexterity does not yet match their sincerity. At Corinthian, the congregation invests itself in novice preachers. They respond collectively in the moment, acknowledging and responding every hint of future greatness. They celebrate that greatness into being through their faithful performance.

The Preaching Congregation

My interest in performed religion in the black pulpit traditions began with the musicality of the preacher's performance in the sermon, but the musical metaphor of singing a sermon led

directly to my broader interest in the congregation. When I compared the sermons at Corinthian to other contexts of musical performance with which I was familiar, I found that the congregation did not fit into the role of “audience” that their seating arrangement would suggest. When I compared the sermon to a concerto, the congregation became the orchestra. In jazz they were sometimes a horn section providing occasional melodic and harmonic punctuation, sometimes a constant rhythm section keeping time, and at other times an instrumental soloist accompanying a featured singer. Moreover, preachers acknowledge, direct, and critique congregational response. Often at Corinthian a guest preacher will follow their initial acknowledgement of God and Pastor Fuzz with a brief explanation to the congregation that they expect to hear some “Amens.” Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr., the guest preacher for Corinthian’s 2007 “Friends and Family Day” celebration, offered a particularly skillful and inviting explanation of his expectations for the congregation as a partner in preaching:

**Recorded Example 5 – Prefatory Comments to “The Questions of A Fool”
Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr. and Congregation (30 September 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(5)]**

Now I’m not gonna keep you too long, but inasmuch as I’ve come from New York to Tennessee, I think I ought to preach [amen yes]
Amen.
But I’m one of the old fashioned kind of preachers. [say that amen come on now]
And I’m gonna need your prayers [come on reverend come on now]
Praying and preaching go together [amen]
And the word says what God hath joined together [praise god]
Let no man put asunder [amen come on]
So if I toss out a word that you know something about say Amen [Amen]
Amen
Bat it back to me with your Amen [alright amen]
But if I say something and you think I’m making it up say help him Jesus [alright] {laughter}
[woo] [alright]
But if you pray with me and for me for just a little while everything will be [alright] [alright]
[amen]
I’ve come with several sermons to preach
Amen
And you can help me get through here if you just say Amen [amen]
But if you just sit there and look at me I might think that I did not get my point across [come on now]
And I’ll have to spend a while on that particular point. [amen] [alright] [come on reverend]

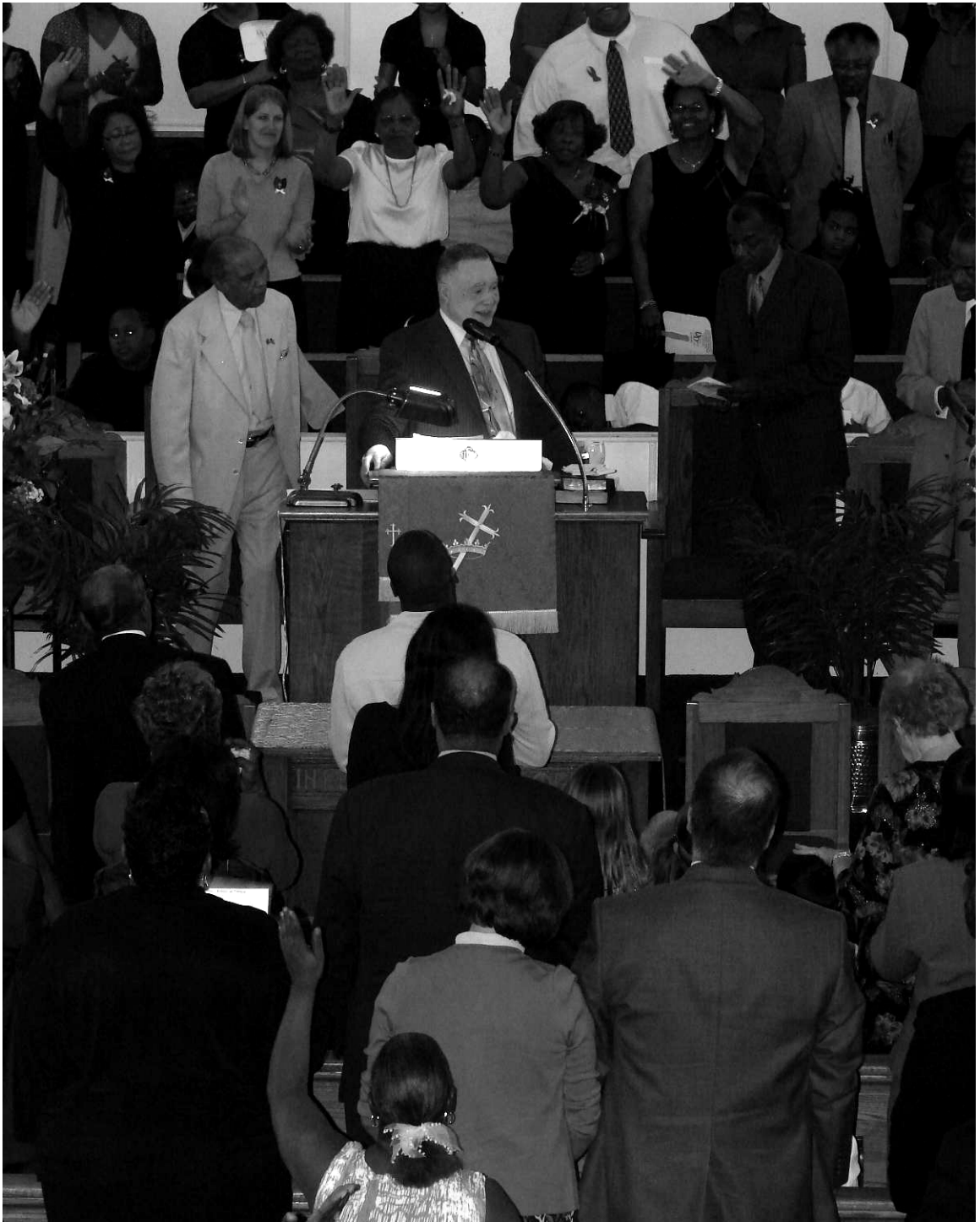


Figure 39: Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr. surrounded by the congregation and the choir



Figure 40: The congregation

Undergirding the humorous “Help him Jesus” contingency and the tongue-in-cheek implication that a few Amens will keep him from preaching too long is the shared belief that the preacher and the congregation bear joint responsibility for the sermon. The preacher has studied the text and prayerfully considered the content in advance. The preacher bears the responsibility for bringing “a word from the Lord,” but the congregation is responsible for receiving that word and measuring its meaning.

Black (and white) preachers, like secular performers, become significant through their relationship with their audience. The 20th Century saw the group of people of which the preacher constituted the center expand from Du Bois's twenty or a thousand into the hundreds of thousands and tens of millions as recording and broadcast technology projected the preacher's voice beyond the brush arbors and the rough walls of the early Black Church. C.L. Franklin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Gardner C. Taylor, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and every other major 20th Century black preacher achieved his status as a prophetic pop star in part through his ability to engage with mass-culture as a mass-congregation. Lesser-known preachers performing on local stages likewise succeed or fail in their roles as pastors and preachers through their ability to cultivate relationships with the congregations they encounter. The difference between Dr. King's amplified, recorded, and reproduced proclamations of his "I Have a Dream" speech to unknown millions and the first performance of "The Eagle Stirs Her Nest" by an unknown preacher to an unknown but certainly smaller congregation is a one of scale rather than type.

Pastor Fuzz falls somewhere between the household names and the great preachers lost to an unrecorded history. He preaches regularly to congregations numbering between a couple dozen and several hundred, but he also engages in a prophetic ministry that serves an unseen radio congregation while cultivating personal and political relationships with powerful figures in Nashville to advance a ministry of social justice. Like Kim and Gleason and a host of other preachers, he was called out of the choir to preach for a congregation that saw his future before he did. The Herefords and others like them fed the bodies and souls of these proto-preachers, nurturing and "loving" them into preachers. Congregations form their preachers and claim them as their own. Congregations preach through and with their preachers, establishing their collective role as a partner in preaching "without whom," as Mitchell writes, "the sermon event would be impossible" (1990: 113) not only in the moment of performance, but in the identification and formation of the masterful soloists with whom they preach.

CHAPTER III

THE CONGREGATION'S MUSIC

The Music of Negro religion is that plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences, which, despite caricature and defilement, still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil. Sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, it was adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave, until, under the stress of law and whip, it became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903:134)

Reading Du Bois's description of "the Music of Negro religion," the sounds seem to emanate from the rocks and trees of the African forests or from the poignant but abstract emotions of a people tortured and tempered by American slavery. The links to Africa – a topic of debate through which one can trace the history of black and white race relations in America – and the abomination of slavery were certainly relevant to the music making that inspired Du Bois's 1903 description, but just as the preacher "varies according to time and place," so does the music. At the beginning of the twenty-first century slavery narratives have passed from first-hand memory into the realms of oral tradition and written history while the effects of America's peculiar institution continue to shape the lives of Americans born decades after the proclamations and amendments of the 1860s. The music that Du Bois describes as having been "adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave" has since shaped and been shaped by generations of Negroes, Colored Folk, Blacks, Afro-Americans and African Americans. It walked through time with the echoes and legacy of slavery in the form of failed reconstruction, formal and informal disenfranchisement, the dehumanization and state-sanctioned terrorism of Jim Crow, a campaign for Civil Rights left unfinished through assassination and cooptation, and the lingering, festering racism that shades daily life with overtones of pessimism, suspicion and despair. It has heard Thomas Dorsey, Aretha Franklin, the freedom singers, T.D. Jakes's Potter's House Choir, and 50 Cent. It is amplified, recorded, broadcast, distributed, and marketed as product. Still, if Corinthian is any indication of the broader Black Church, then music is as important as ever to the performance of worship, community, and individual identity, and that music comes not from rocks, trees, and abstractions, but from living, breathing, *faithful* women and men.

The congregation musicks - creating, claiming, and celebrating their music as surly as they do their preachers. They create music with their bodies, and through song they transcend the physical limitations of those bodies, ministering musically to themselves and others in songs of lament and celebration and thanksgiving.

Musical Orientation

It's a sunny spring morning and you step into Corinthian a few minutes after 11:00. As you receive a program and a welcome from the ushers, you hear Harmon Stockdale, Corinthian's minister of music, playing softly on an electric keyboard, mingling an improvised prelude on a favorite gospel tune with the ebb and flow of conversation. The sounds of drums and an electric bass join Harmon's keyboard, and from time to time you hear fragments of lyrics about a friend as Harmon sings to himself almost out of range of a live microphone. The music and conversation slowly build until after a dozen minutes or so, a young man walks confidently to the pulpit, taps the microphone and offers a call to worship from Psalm 100, inviting you and the rest of the congregation to:

**Recorded Example 6 – Call to Worship & “I’m So Glad”
Rev. Gleason Rogers & The Another Level Choir (11 March 2006)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(6)]**

Rev. Gleason Rogers: Make a joyful noise
Unto the lord
All the earth
Worship the lord with gladness
Come into his presence
With singing...

As Reverend Gleason continues the call to worship he reminds you that the Lord is good and we are his people. He asks you to rise for the procession of “The Another Level Choir,” and you watch one young man, several teenage girls and a half-dozen younger children stroll down the aisle. As they amble in, you can feel the music from the keyboard, bass, and drums in your body. Your foot moves with the beat as the choir assembles in the empty elevated pews behind the pulpit. They mark time with their bodies in the choir stand, swaying left, pause, right, pause, left, pause, right... They sing, “I’m so glad troubles don’t last always,” and you find yourself swaying gently back and forth in your seat, matching the

choir's moves in miniature. They sing that "Weeping may endure for the night." They sing that you should, "keep the faith," because, "it will be alright." They repeat these lyrics a dozen times or more, until by the middle of the five minute performance, you know them well enough to sing along. After a brief instrumental break the choir drives the message home: "Troubles don't last always. No no no troubles don't last always." You applaud along with the rest of the congregation at the conclusion of the song, expressing your shared appreciation for the choir's enthusiastic performance and for the change that performance has created in the spirit of the congregation.

Then Deacon Woodruff steps up to the microphone for the deacon's devotional time. He acknowledges the choir's performance, half asking and half proclaiming, "The choir sang a good song up there this morning, didn't they?" You contribute to the cacophony of agreement. He continues, commenting casually on the scriptural basis of the song, segueing from the musical choir processional into the deacons' devotional time.

Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff: I'm so glad that trouble don't last always. The Bible says it came to pass. Don't worry about what's happening now. Whatever's happening will come to pass. This is our devotional time. I'm gonna ask that you join in song, prayer, and scripture.

Following the deacon's invitation to "join in song, prayer, and scripture," you turn to the back of your hymnal and read along with the responsive reading. Then Deacon Woodruff leads the congregation back into music. With scores of others, you begin to sing.

**Recorded Example 7 – "So Glad I'm Here"
Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff & Congregation (11 March 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(7)]**

NW: Alright Corinthian, I'm so glad I'm here. I don't know about you. I'm gonna sing this song, 'So Glad I'm Here' this morning.
God has been good. He woke us up this morning.
Oh how good and pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity.
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm here. Come on Corinthian!
So glad I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here in Jesus' - Come on, Corinthian. We can do better now.
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here in Jesus' name. Love brought us here this morning, church.
Love brought me here. Love brought me here.

Love brought me here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Love brought me here. Love brought me here.
Love brought me here in Jesus' name — You know, we could have been gone, church.
Could have been gone. Could have been gone.
Could have been gone in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Could have been gone. Could have been gone.
Could have been gone in Jesus' name. Since we're here, we ought to sing while we're here,
church.
Sing while I'm here. Sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Sing while I'm here. Sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here in Jesus' name. We oughta pray while we're here, church.
Pray while I'm here. Pray while I'm here.
Pray while I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Pray while I'm here. Pray while I'm here.
Pray while I'm here in Jesus' — And if the Spirit says so, we're gonna shout while we're here,
church.
Shout while I'm... Let us all stand. Shout while I'm here.
Shout while I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Shout while I'm here. Shout while I'm here.
Shout while I'm here in Jesus' — We ought to fellowship, don't you think so?
Fellowship while I'm here. Shake your neighbor's hand. Fellowship while I'm here.
May it be your last time. You don't know. — here in Jesus' name. Fellowship, Church!
Fellowship while I'm here. Fellowship while I'm here.
Fellowship while I'm here in Jesus' name. So glad, Church.
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm — Fellowship, Church.
So glad I'm here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
So glad I'm here. So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here in Jesus' — You know, we could have been gone, now.
Could have been gone. Could have been gone.
Could have been gone in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Could have been gone. Could have been gone.
Could have been gone — Love brought us here this morning, church.
Love brought me here. Love brought me here.
Love brought me here in Jesus' name. Ohhh
Love brought me here. Love brought me here.
Love brought me here in Jesus' name. Amen. Y'all say, "Amen."



Figure 41: Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff leading a devotional song on a Sunday morning

You smile as you notice yourself singing that you will “Sing while [you’re] here,” enjoying the way the performance of the song creates the conditions it describes. As you work through the other verses, you learn more about the expectations of worship. Here singing, praying, and, if the spirit says so, shouting are the appropriate responses to the gladness that comes from recognizing one’s dependence upon a loving God. When Deacon Woodruff tells the church to “fellowship,” you shake hands with the people standing around you and watch as the deacons and several others migrate around the entire sanctuary greeting old friends and welcoming visitors.



Figure 42: “Fellowship, Church!”

By the time the song concludes, you *are* glad to be here. Having completed the scripture reading and the singing, Deacon Woodruff continues on to “prayer time” as Harmon continues playing softly, accompanying the deacon.

**Recorded Example 8 – Prayer Time & “Thank You Lord”
Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff & Congregation (11 March 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(8)]**

NW: Some people couldn't wake this morning [Amen]
The lord is good
He's blessed us to be in the house of worship one more time
Amen [Amen]
It's prayer time corinthian [Yes sir]
And I'm sure you all have something to pray for [Oh yes]
Something to be thankful for [Yes]
If nothing but god woke you up this morning [Yes yes yes]
And you ought to have something to be thankful for

And I hope you left all your burdens at the door when you came in
 And when you leave out let them stay there [Amen]
 The ushers I think they probably gonna take em on out anyway if they see them outside the door
 [Amen] [*laughter*]
 So whatever burdens you brought in and left them outside the door
 Pray that god will bless us and that god will continue to keep us
 In case you forgot to give the lord some praise and some thanks this morning for being so good
 to you
 Let's just sing thank you lord just for a minute
 Before our prayer
Thank you, lord. Sing it like you mean it, church.
Thank you, lord.
Thank you, lord.
I just want to thank you, lord. Has he been good, church?
Been so good. He's been good, church.
Been so good.
Been so good.
I just want to thank you, lord. He's been a friend to you too, church.
Been my friend.
Been my friend. He'll never leave you nor forsake you.
Been my friend.
I just want to thank you, Lord.
 Let us bow our heads in prayer
 Our father which art in heaven
 The maker and creator of heaven and earth and all therein

 ...[*Deacon Woodruff's prayer continues for several minutes*]...

And we pray heavenly father for the speaker this morning
 The one that's gonna stand in john's shoes this morning we ask heavenly father that you crown his
 head with wisdom and knowledge
 Let him preach one lord one faith and one baptism
 And help us heavenly father not only to be hearers of the word but help us to be doers of the
 word
 Let this little light of ours heavenly father as we go out into a dying world
 Tell em that jesus christ is lord
 And the wages of sin is death
 This is my prayer in jesus' name
 Amen

Even prayer time is music time. Deacon Woodruff leads the congregation in a sung prayer
 of thanksgiving acknowledging God's goodness and the church's gratitude before offering

an extended spoken prayer. Harmon carries the music of “Thank You Lord” through the prayer, vamping quietly under the deacon’s voice until he concludes “in Jesus’ name.”

During the forty minutes or so between the published start time of 11:00 AM and the end of Deacon Woodruff’s prayer, Corinthian musicks its congregation into order. The individuals and families walking through the doors enter a space defined by Harmon’s music as they reconnect with church friends through handshakes and hugs exchanged in shifting pairs and small clusters of people. Reverend Gleason calls the congregation to attention, directing them to praise God with singing and to receive the second group of musical specialists, The Another Level Choir. The choir leads a song of gratitude and encouragement that invites the congregation into musical participation as individuals and as a collective body, listening, but also swaying, singing, and clapping along with the music. Then Deacon Woodruff takes over representing the deacons, yet another group of musical specialists involved in leading the worship. Like the instrumental musicians and the choir members, the deacons play important roles in leading the congregation musically. He first invites the congregation to join their voices together reading responsively, then lines out a deceptively simple gospel-blues-based song that teaches the church’s basic expectations of congregational performance. For some of those expectations – singing, fellowshiping, and being glad – the musical performance not only describes but also creates the conditions appropriate for worship. For others, it describes and reinforces the relevant expectations; the congregation might shout if the spirit says so, and it certainly will pray. Then, rather than yielding to prayer, music becomes prayer as Deacon Woodruff leads a prayer-song of thanks. When Deacon Woodruff finally does begin leading his spoken prayer, Harmon keeps the song “Thank You, Lord” playing softly in the background. The congregation, now fully constituted and reasonably well warmed-up begins to add their voices of assent, accent, and encouragement to the deacon’s prayer. Despite being somewhat more subdued, perhaps because of the bowed-head solemnity of prayer, this collaboration by sacred soloist, instrumental accompaniment, and engaged congregation is immediately identifiable as a variation on the type that occurs in a sermon. Even though this Sunday’s sermon may not begin for almost an hour, the congregation is nearly ready now. It will participate in the singing and the giving and even the announcements that occur between the end of the devotional and the beginning of the sermon, but the congregation is one or two good songs

away from being ready to receive “the one who’s gonna stand in John’s shoes” and perform their roles musically and religiously as hearers and doers during the sermon.

The music of Corinthian is a critical component of the integrated performance of religion. It creates the sacred space by filling the sanctuary and leaking out doors and windows into the spaces beyond. It derives authority from ancient sacred texts and illuminates those texts in more modern musical styles, collapsing the temporal gap between recent generations and distant biological, cultural, and spiritual ancestors. It invites individuals, even you, to become a part of the congregation through voice and movement, and it provides examples of and instruction in the performance of worship. It precedes prayer, and becomes prayer, and accompanies and contextualizes prayer. Music defines the limits of Corinthian as well as any measure of residency, official membership, or theological proclivity because music is how religion and community are accomplished at Corinthian. Corinthian’s ministers and congregation perform their religious identities out loud, forming and re-forming their lives of faith through overlapping acts of musicking religion and religioning music.

Musicking Corinthian’s Religion

Du Bois’s description of the music still rings true to my experience of the sounds of worship at Corinthian, but that resonance has little to do with his description of the sound. Writing about a largely oral tradition, Du Bois happily avoids focusing on the notations found in hymnals or transcribed in scholarly monographs as “music.” He places more emphasis on the sound, the “plaintive rhythmic melody, with its touching minor cadences,” but thankfully the sound as sound is only one featured element in his description. Thinking back to a hundred or more Sunday and Wednesday services, a distinct minority of the sounds I remember would fit under the rubric of plaintive rhythmic melody with touching minor cadences. Consider the music of the Sunday described above – it includes mostly major harmonies with vigorous tempos and melodies that range from exuberant to solemn but hardly approach plaintive. There are some musical moments, especially songs led by Sister Mattie Shannon on Wednesday nights, that direct me back to Du Bois’s description, but a large fraction of any given Sunday at Corinthian belongs to songs of praise and celebration. Still, Du Bois and I write about the same music. I know this because Sister Vanessa Croney tells me so:

Vanessa Croney: The songs that [the deacons and older members] sing, some of them come from the hymn book which I grew up listening to in Sunday school. And a lot of the songs that the choir sings and the praise team sings are varieties of those hymns. Those words come from those hymns. They're just rearranged and set to different music. So they offer us, if I may say, purity in their songs. When you hear them talk about old time religion it's basically the foundation of before you hear the choir sing, listen to where this came from and if it stirs your soul when the choir sings, listen to it in its pure form, in its original form. My dad, growing up with him, can tell you, you know it kinda goes back to slavery and the days of trials and tribulations and hard times, and, you know, nobody was bebopping around to Kirk Franklin and singing, you know, Donald Lawrence. They were singing old negro spirituals, and those are the songs that got them through, and a lot of times, and I admit, some of those songs I don't really care for because it makes me sad. And so, but with my father, it doesn't make them sad. And it took me a long time to understand that. I thought - why are y'all always singing those old sad songs? Because it represents something different to them, and they're trying to show us that this is the foundation of the music that you sing. This is where that came from. We're singing what got us through.

Vanessa's comments help me to read Du Bois more carefully and notice that the music is, as he describes it, not simply a collection of minor cadences and plaintive rhythmic melodies but more importantly an "original and beautiful expression of life and longing." Vanessa reminds us that the plaintive expressions of intense sorrow inspired by "the tragic soul-life of the slave" are still a part of Corinthian's music. Secondly, she makes an explicit connection between "those old sad songs" and the different styles of music performed by the choirs and the praise team. The new songs descend from the old hymns, casting contemporary perspectives on canonical texts in the timbres and styles of the twenty-first century. They continue to express life and longing as living generations and remembered foreparents mingle in the musicking.

Vanessa's insights into the connections between musical performances that sound different in spite of their meaningful connections reveals an approach to music as a process rather than as an object. From this perspective, the noun, "music," becomes a verb. When Vanessa sings her songs and praises the purity of an older generation's songs and explains the fundamental connection between the sorrow songs of Du Bois's text, the sad old songs that her father sings, and "bebopping around to Kirk Franklin [and] Donald Lawrence," she is musicking (Small, 1998). Exploring musicking primarily as culturally-significant performance rather than sciencing music as a physical phenomenon is a hallmark of contemporary ethnomusicology. It is an ethnomusicological approach to music consistent with Geertz's theory of culture and related to Titon's emphasis on "knowing people making music" that focuses on music being done rather than on music as a collection of artifacts and

sonic abstractions. The verbing of a familiar term like music to emphasize the doer, the doing, and the deed rather than artifacts or arbitrary, abstract categories is more than word-play; it is disciplining language and humanizing inquiry to improve understanding.

Focusing on music makes it easy to emphasize the sound waves or representations and analyses of those sound waves. An approach that privileges sound and deemphasizes the intent, context, and performers involved in its creation would group “the touching minor cadences” from Du Bois’s memory with the caricatures that Du Bois mentions. It would fail to connect the recorded performance of “Every Year Has A Number” that begins this ethnography with the major, up-tempo songs of celebration, encouragement, and invitation that are equally important to Corinthian’s musical worship. Such a logic would equate listening to a pristine audio recording of that performance played over a superb set of speakers with being in the sanctuary with the real Mattie Shannon as she sings. No matter how perfectly technology might replicate the acoustical phenomenon, the different contexts would create different experiences for a listener – the sound might be identical, but the *significance* that makes the sound music would never really be the same.

In contrast to the tendency of a noun like “music” to direct attention toward things or an imagined all-inclusive, singular thing, the verb musicking focuses attention toward human action and interaction. Musicking focuses instead on music as something that people do or a way of being in relationship to the world – the doer of the deed persists as a feature of the musicking. The language of musicking focuses attention on what that performer accomplishes through musicking, what a community’s musicking reveals about their understanding of the world and their place in it, and how specific contexts of space, time, and social circumstances impact the way that one musicks. Musicking moves beyond “shape form, and fashion,” standards that Corinthian explicitly rejects in its musicking of religion, to consider functionality. It invites complicated questions that engage the complex whole. The noun, “music,” works as a shorthand in casual conversation, but “the Music” that Du Bois describes and Vanessa performs is best understood as a verb.

Du Bois, Vanessa, and I musick differently. We experience the musical sounds of worship in different ways. We participate in those sounds in different ways. Still, we all engage in the common, nearly-universal human activity of thinking about the musical world around us, interpreting the sounds and the production of those sounds as significant, meaningful features of our experiences. Du Bois and I approach the music and musicking

of the black church out of a shared belief that musicking associated with the religious culture of black Americans is a necessary and potentially rewarding avenue of scholarship. Du Bois called it one of the three core features of that cluster of religious cultures. I feel its potential for capturing the hearts and minds of strangers and inviting them to witness the humanity they share in common with people from whom they are often divided by markers of race, class, and life-experiences. Vanessa's approach to musicking in and about the religious environment at Corinthian is a somewhat more interesting and, not coincidentally, somewhat more productive avenue for accomplishing many of the goals that Du Bois and I set for our scholarly enterprises.

Historian James Banks offers a helpful typology for considering these perspectives. Banks's typology assigns a pair of terms to describe an individual's relationship to a particular culture. The first continuum – from indigenous to external – describes the relationships that develop as a result of birth and acculturation in childhood. The second – ranging from insider to outsider – indicates the current status of the relationship. Du Bois and I began our exploration of this music as relative outsiders. I began as a clear example of what historian James Banks (1998) would call an external-outsider because I was born and grew up in a culture very different from the dominant one at Corinthian.

Typology of Cross-Cultural Researchers		Culture of Interest	
		Insider	Outsider
Culture of Origin	Indigenous	This individual endorses the values perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it.	This individual was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture. The values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge of this individual are identical to those of the outside community. The individual is perceived by indigenous people in the community as an outsider.
	External	This individual was socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes and knowledge. However, because of his or her unique experiences, the individual rejects many of he values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community. The external-insider is viewed by the new community as an “adopted” insider.	The external-outsider is socialized within a community different from the one in which he or she is doing research. The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community.

Figure 43: Banks’s Typology of Cross-Cultural Researchers (from Banks 1998, 8, Table 1)

I find it more difficult to place Du Bois’s authorial voice on Banks’s continua. I cannot designate him either as an insider or outsider, nor can I decide whether his culture of origin is indigenous to or external from those of the folk whose culture he described. Du Bois approaches the music of “slave religion” from a perspective complicated by the veil and the double-consciousness that he claims and explains in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Given the perilous landscape of race in America and in academia during his lifetime it seems impossible that he could have done otherwise. The over-deterministic power of skin color in 19th- and 20th-Century America guaranteed that Du Bois’s experiences in black skin shared many features in common with the experiences of slaves and descendents of slaves whose souls he describes and analyzes. Still, the relative class advantages and the educational experiences he

had while earning degrees from two of the best black and white schools in America – Fisk University and Harvard University – mark significant differences between Du Bois and the vast majority of “Black Folk.” Furthermore, Du Bois must have experienced significant pressure as an academic and one of America’s first great black public intellectuals to conform to the secular intellectual standards of his time. That would include standards that divorced rational thought from so-called “primitive” emotionalism. The pressure on Du Bois individually and as a conspicuous counter-example to racist assumptions about African Americans’ collective irrational primitivism must have provided strong incentives for Du Bois to approach ecstatic, rhythmic, sensual worship with an extra degree of scholarly detachment.

Unlike either Du Bois or me, Vanessa Croney approaches musicking in the Black Church and Corinthian’s musicking in particular as an indigenous insider according to Banks’s typology. As a director, soloist, and long-time member of Corinthian’s music ministries, she offers an important perspective for understanding the musical performance of religion at Corinthian. She grew up at Corinthian. Her father and mother, Deacon David Majors and Sister Verna Majors brought her up in the church. She was baptized at Corinthian at the age of six. She and her husband, Rev. Eric Croney, have two children in the church. Vanessa is one of Corinthian’s choir directors and a frequent soloist with the Inspirational Choir and the Mass Choir. She leads the Praise Team – a small ensemble of five young women who add a different sound and style to the array of musical ministries at Corinthian. She grew up in Corinthian’s musical culture and identifies with it. She claims it as her own, and Corinthian claims her.

Vanessa’s quote about “those old sad songs” that her father’s generation sings expresses some important ideas that Du Bois’s writings overlook or deemphasize. Better than my quote from Du Bois, Vanessa explains that the songs of Corinthian’s most senior members not only express human life and longing, but that they were involved in *sustaining* human life and longing and hope through what Du Bois describes as “the stress of law and whip.” Not even the oldest members of Corinthian’s congregation were alive when Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, but they belong to a generation that grew up in contact with relatives who lived through slavery. Vanessa echoes a common sentiment at Corinthian when she explains that songs, especially the old songs, got people through hard times. Slavery often ranks first among these hard times. Other hard times include a century

of dealing with what Du Bois called “the problem of race in America,” manifest both in the formal conflicts of the Civil Rights Movement and in a million daily encounters that collectively constitute a cultural orthodoxy of racism. Still more fundamentally, these hard times include the dozens of personal traumas that punctuate any long life lived well – broken hearts, illnesses, worries about family and friends, deaths of parents, deaths of children – threats to life and joy that impact all people without regard for wealth or privilege. People got through hard times singing songs, ministering to themselves through the act of singing. People got through hard times by listening to songs, receiving comfort and consolation by musicking.

In addition to helping people work through the day to day struggles of previous generations, singing the songs and talking about the songs preserved the memory of that expression in successive generations. The songs carry not only the memory of suffering, but also some of the resources required to endure that suffering into the 21st century.

VC: And so even though I say I don't care for them sometimes, you still may find me humming “Amazing Grace” or singing something every now and then. An old hymn will come to me when this other stuff just won't, because it stays with you. It's just in your heart and in your soul and it just kinda, I can't explain it, but it just gets you through that moment or that day when you're going through. Even if you don't know the words, you can hum that tune and just keep going. No I don't think about slaves, and I don't think about things people went through when they were listening to it, but because they gave us the foundation to be able to hear those songs, when I *am* humming those songs, I'm thinking about what I'm going through and this is gonna get me through.

The suffering, longing, and hope that Du Bois attributes to the songs are reperformed like a Eucharistic meal each time those songs emerge into the music-life of the congregation – either as devotional songs sung on Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights, as fragmented phrases incorporated into a sermon, or as echoes reverberating through the new songs of Kirk Franklin, Donald Lawrence, and the younger voices at Corinthian. Vanessa describes the old songs as foundational, pure sources that inform current creations. This makes these old songs a strong source of comfort and enduring wisdom, a body of musicked interpretation second only to Biblical scripture as a common fountain of religious and musical inspiration.

It is not a coincidence that the deacons' devotional time on Sunday morning and the Wednesday night devotionals that precede a sermon are both comprised of scripture, prayer,

and song. The Sunday morning devotionals generally follow the pattern of the one at the beginning of this chapter. The Wednesday night devotionals have their own structure.

NW: You know how we operate on Wednesdays? This is our devotional period where anybody can sing, read the scripture, pray. It's time to go we start it at 7:30. Three two nine.

I am thine O Lord...

Beginning with Deacon Woodruff and the other deacons, several of the dozen or more members gathered for worship will take turns leading a song, reading scripture, and praying. Most often a deacon will do all three, usually in that order. Other members might only sing and read or read and pray. Wednesday night services generally feature the voices of the older members and the style of music that Vanessa describes as “pure” and sometimes sad. Other than Deacon Majors arriving a little late, the devotional period on March 21st of 2007 was fairly typical:

0:00¹ Conversation before service... mostly NW... lots of laughter
4:10 NW explains how Wednesday Night services work
4:45 NW leads Hymn #329 “Draw Me Nearer”
9:55 NW reads from James
11:35 NW prays
13:25 Sister Peggy Petty reads Psalm 124
14:18 PP prays
15:32 Sister Patsy Hereford leads Hymn #164 “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”
18:50 Sister Hattie Black reads Psalm 100 “Make a joyful noise”
19:28 HB prays
21:21 EF leads Hymn #465 “Jesus Loves Me”
25:20 DM leads Hymn #162 “Pass Me Not (O Gentle Savior)”
31:19 DM prays
35:08 EF leads “Father I Stretch My Hands to Thee”
39:26 EF introduces Rev. Turner

Figure 44: Timeline of the devotional period on 21 March 2007

Roughly half of this devotional period passes in song – slow, serious song that stretches time and makes space for different voices to add their distinctive characters to the soundscape. The tempo, timbre, and tenor of musicking on Wednesday night is different from the sounds of Sunday worship, but the intent is the same. The congregation musicks itself into relationship with the word. They express their gratitude and concerns through prayer and

¹ Timing in minutes and seconds from the beginning of the field recording.

song and psalms. They musick themselves into a state of readiness to receive the word from the preacher. They try to musick the preacher into a state of readiness to deliver a word from the Lord. The sounds change between Wednesday night and Sunday morning, but the religious intentions motivating the musicking remain closely related.

Vanessa's comments about the links between the old songs and the new ones establish a connection between the music as Du Bois described it and the musical performance of religion at Corinthian that sound alone could not demonstrate. While the sonic features of the music Du Bois describes match with only a small but significant subset of the sounds I hear at Corinthian, he describes the function and cultural features of that music in ways that Vanessa ties directly to the musicking that happens at Corinthian every week. Du Bois's focus on the sonic aspects of the event to the exclusion of the physical, social, and spiritual lives of the women, children, and men who perform that musical ministry makes it easy to misunderstand the deeper significance of a ministry that uses music to perform a deep faith and gratitude to God and to impact hearts, minds, and souls. Fortunately, the choir members, deacons, preachers, and congregants at Corinthian maintain a culture that does music in such a way that questions of "shape, form, or fashion," a phrase often used at Corinthian to describe and reject a typically worldly emphasis on appearance over substance, are tangential at best to the primary concerns of function and faithfulness.

On the level of shape, form, and fashion – the sphere in which strictly musical analysis or aesthetic judgments might occur – the sound at Corinthian is often, but not always, exceptional. The sounds produced by the strongest, most experienced song leaders at Corinthian could compare favorably to those of professional singers in any number of genres. This hardly qualifies as news; many of the greatest and most successful singers in American popular music trace their musical roots back to the black church. What is perhaps more interesting than the virtuosic performances of Corinthian's best musicians on their best days is how consistently Corinthian's most powerful and technically proficient performers focus on singing as an act of faith and ministry rather than as a musical performance. In every conversation I have had with Corinthian's musical leaders, they describe the music as a method for facilitating contact between God and God's people, not a religious outlet for musical talent, but instead a performance of religion through musical methods.

Through this approach to music, Mattie's performance at the end of a Wednesday night service of a "Every Year Has a Number" as a song of invitation enters into

relationship with the wide array of classic and contemporary gospel songs that the choir has performed to accompany the pastor's invitation to people to join the church on Sundays. It also connects the musicking surrounding Mattie's performance to other acts of musicking that foreground the fragility of human life, memories of lost loved ones, and concern for the fate of unsaved friends and family. Musicking links the Wednesday night when I recorded Mattie's rendition of "Every Year Has a Number" with the Monday afternoon months later as I remember it. It links both of these moments and the thoughts that accompany them with Deacon Woodruff's musical reminder in "So Glad I'm Here" that, "You know, we could have been gone, church." It links these public, communal performances with the times when Vanessa Croney tends to dying patients in her vocation as a critical care nurse, singing softly in their ears, administering comfort musically and medically to the somebodies who will soon be gone:

VC: I work in critical care, and I've always wanted to work around the sickest of the sick. I don't like, I call them walkie-talkies. I don't like walkie-talkie patients cause I just don't feel like they're very sick. Ain't that bad? But I like them really really sick. And I've seen a lot of people die. And I've been there during a lot of deaths and held a lot of hands and sang a lot of songs in people's ears and – just because I just felt like God was calling me to do that. I've sat there and just watched people die. I've actually seen in my mind their transition, you know, I could just see them reaching up for Jesus. I could see - I was like, Lord - And I would say it, and people would think, "She's crazy." I'd say, "Jesus is on the way. She's leaving here tonight," and they would.

Deacon Woodruff sings about the precariousness of life to encourage a congregation to praise and worship God out of gratitude for one more day. Sister Mattie sings about loss, longing and regret associated with the inevitability of death to set the tone for a person in the congregation making a choice to be baptized into the community of believers at Corinthian. Sister (and Nurse) Vanessa Croney sings comfort to dying patients, musicking herself and her patients into communities of two that face death together. The sounds of religion at Corinthian are rich and remarkable, but the musicking that makes those sounds meaningful is richer and more remarkable still, in part because it is so closely bound up with doing religion at Corinthian.

As Small argues and Corinthian demonstrates, music is not a thing that is, but is instead a category of things that are done. In English we speak of making music, but more accurately we *do* music. Music does not become; music occurs. And when people do music, music does things to people. The members and leaders of Corinthian expect music to do

many things. Music clears distractions and allows people to focus on God. Music facilitates people's experience of God. Music allows people to express, as Du Bois writes, all manners of human emotion. Music allows worshipers to come together as a community of faith. Music, as Corinthian understands and performs it, brings the word of God to the people of God. Insofar as the people of Corinthian engage in these activities, they are musicking; they are also, quite obviously, religioning.

Recalling the reasons for verbing music into musicking, religion offers an even more appealing target for linguistic reassignment. Like music, religion is not something that is; it is something that is done. It is not a collection of texts, truths, or even beliefs; it is a way of living in spaces, times, and circumstances that are charged with learned significance. The various academic disciplines that mine the nouns of religion seeking particular kinds of truths in obscure texts written in dead languages err grievously if they assume that their discipline-specific proofs, conclusions, perspectives and arguments necessarily matter in communities that have different ways of living with the things that scholars study. It does not matter if the King James Bible presents an academically rigorous translation from the Greek; people at Corinthian read it and regard it as Holy Scripture. Religioning ties the King James Bible and the Baptist hymnal and the oral traditions of parents and grandparents' stories, deacons' jokes about tithing, preachers favorite songs, church picnics and Christmas pageants into a rich tapestry of religioned culture. In this context, musicking is a means to a religioned end. As an ethnomusicologist, I was fully prepared to find, as I describe in this chapter, Corinthian's ministers, congregants, and musical specialists engaged in the musicking of religion. I was less prepared, and therefore, surprised and excited to find that the most expert musicians at Corinthian are not only musicking religion, but are also, perhaps more precisely, religioning music.

Corinthian's Musician(s)

When someone at Corinthian talks about "the musician," that person is referring to Harmon Stockdale. He plays the keyboard, arranges the choirs' music, rehearses the choirs, and occasionally sings lead parts in songs. Dozens of people at Corinthian will be featured in musical performances of religious significance every week, but in the minutes of the church business meetings, in the budget, and in the common usage of the term at the church, Harmon is designated as *the* musician. Sometimes a person will pluralize the term to include

other instrumentalists as the musicians. Most often this would include Craig and E.J., the drummer and bass guitarist who play with Harmon in the band. Less often, it might include the guitarist and saxophonist who occasionally sit in with Harmon, Craig, and E.J.



Figure 45: “The Musician,” Harmon Stockdale, Jr.



Figure 46: Craig Bailey, “the drummer”



Figure 47: The musicians

The dozens of women and children and the few men who comprise the Inspirational Choir (the adult choir), the Another Level Choir (the youth choir) and the Mass Choir (the combined choir) are not generally called musicians. Sister Elois Outlaw, who insists that she is not musically inclined, is not called a musician even though she coordinates worship music with Harmon and Pastor Fuzz in her role as the choir president and solos several times each year. Regular soloists and song leaders like Sisters Betty Lane, Tara Hereford, Bethani Fuzz, and Vanessa Crony are not typically described as musicians, despite their obvious musical talent and their important participation in musical worship.



Figure 48: The Women's Day Choir

Sister Mattie Shannon who sings in the choir and occasionally transforms Wednesday nights with songs like the one that introduced this dissertation is not called a musician. The preachers who might be called singing preachers, Pastor Fuzz, Rev. Richardson, Rev. Baugh, and Rev. Sheehan, sing with the choir or as a part of their sermons or as a part of altar prayer or communion, but they are not called musicians. Even the preachers who might not call themselves singers perform musically. Rev. Cronney sang during a recent sermon, and Rev. Gleason is among the congregation's and the choirs' favorite directors. The deacons all sing, but no one calls them musicians.

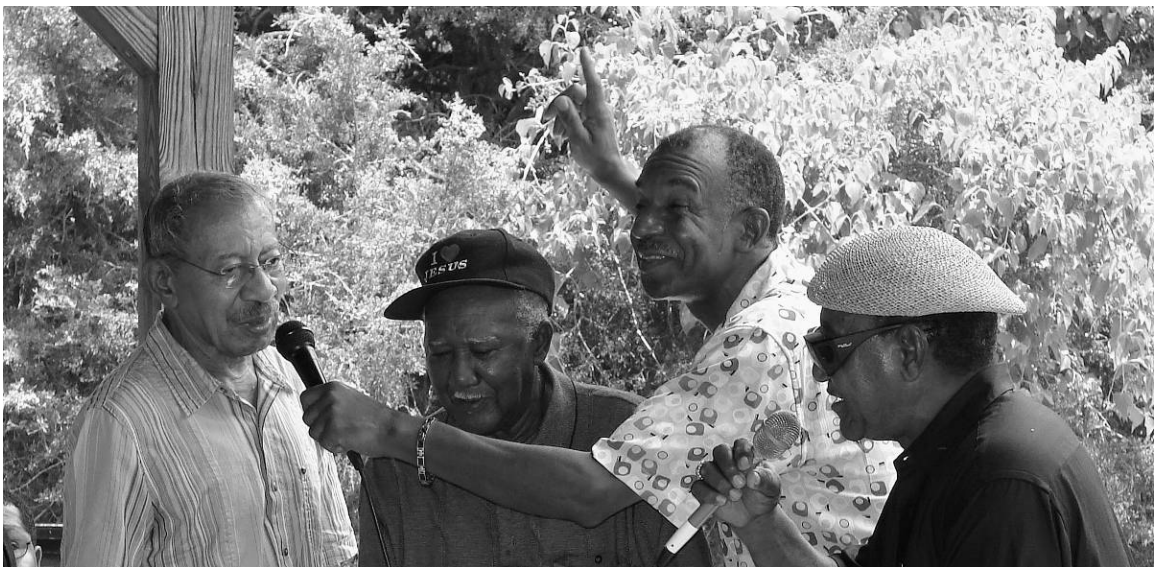


Figure 49 (left to right): Deacon Benjamin Flagg, Deacon David Majors, Pastor Fuzz, and Deacon Woodruff singing at a church picnic

So Corinthian only has one musician – Harmon Stockdale – but it has dozens of members and ministers whose performances of their religious identities include music and scores more in the congregation who participate in those musical performances in the same ways they help a preacher preach a sermon.



Figure 50: Corinthian’s Mass Choir

The fact that these obviously musically talented women and men are not called musicians is more than just a semantic issue. They are not called musicians because their musicking is subordinate to and included in their roles as religious specialists. Their musicking is coextensive with their religioning, as Vanessa Cronney explains:

VC: One day it just came to me: This is what you do. You know? This is your thing. This is what God has placed this on your heart. Because I always felt that my voice was odd. You know I thought - I don’t have the high voice. I can sing every part, but I always felt like I don’t have the high voice. I just don’t have the singer’s voice. And one day it’s just like God opened my eyes and was like, “But I gave you that voice, and I need you to sing for me because I have things to minister to people that won’t hear the sermon but’ll hear what you sing.” And so I knew then. You know. So for me it’s ministry. And for me it’s a calling. For me it’s a connection between me and God. So even when I’m going through times and trials and tribulations, you just may see me just walking around singing just to get through it. It’s just a part of me.

Vanessa describes her musicking as a calling, marking it as a religious act. She talks about her voice as “odd,” not “the singer’s voice.” She does her thing with religious intent, describing it as something that God “placed...on [her] heart.” She does not report discovering that she could sing and then seeking out a way to do ministry with her talent.

Instead she reports believing that she did not have “the singer’s voice” and that she embraced the role of singer only after “God opened [her] eyes” and declared her voice to be a tool for ministry. Hearing Vanessa explain her music helped me to understand why all her specialized musicking did not make her a musician. Although she regularly participates in the creation of extraordinary music, she does so with the intention of participating in a ministry, religioning musically in response to a connection that she experiences with God.

As she continues to explain her current approach to her musical ministry, she reminds me of Pastor Fuzz’s attitudes about ministry.

VC: So I’ve been singing for a long time and singing for me is more of a passion, more of a spiritual thing. I’ve never wanted to be before people as a part of a spotlight. I don’t have to be recognized. I don’t have to be called out. I just – when it’s time for me to sing, it’s me and God’s time. I’m not worried about who’s around me, who’s – I’m worried about who’s listening to me for the sake of I want to make sure that this song is ministered to their hearts and not just up here, you know, putting on a show and just, “Oooh I want y’all to hear me sing sing sing.” And for a long time I didn’t even actually acknowledge the fact that I did solos or I did lead songs. I was just like, “Well, just the choir - I sing in the choir. Every now and then I’ll lead a song. Blah blah blah.” And people started asking me to sing solos outside of the church, especially my family - a lot of my family sings - and I’d still [say], “I don’t really sing solos, but I’ll sing.”

Like Pastor Fuzz, Vanessa avoids the spotlight. In this response, and in the ordinary course of events as I have observed them at Corinthian, Vanessa consistently downplays her musical talent and accomplishments, redirecting focus toward the broader ministry of the church. This is utterly typical of the mature singers, instrumentalists, and preachers whom I have encountered through my work at Corinthian. They sidestep acknowledgement, redirecting personal compliments about their performances to God.

Early on, I found it difficult to effectively communicate my appreciation to a singer or a preacher for his or her performance. The wide variety of compliments I learned to deliver over years of attending concerts as a musician and a friend of musicians were ineffective for encouraging people who were more concerned about ministering to others than in mastering a musical composition or proving their skills. Compliments about sound or technique were quickly, courteously dismissed or redirected to God. Compliments about a performance’s impact on me – that it would stay with me during the week or that it brought a message that I needed to hear – seem to make a better impression. These are the compliments that she remembers, perhaps because they are the ones that reinforce her understanding of what she is really doing when she sings.

VC: So some people won't hear the sermon. They'll be there for the sermon, but they're not gonna get what they need as far as their nourishment from God. That's what they need to get through the rest of the week. For example, I've had people come up to me Sunday after Sunday that I've sung a song and say, "That song really touched my heart. I've been listening to that song all week that you sang. When are you gonna sing that song again because it really touched me?" It got them through something that was going on in their life that I had no idea about, but God used me to minister to them to say, "Hey, it's gonna be alright," you know?

Singing, as Vanessa describes it is a ministry of nourishment, a musical act that provides God's people with what they need to get through the week.

Vanessa's explanation of her approach to singing is consistent with this notion of singing as an act of ministry rather than as an act of art or vocal athleticism. She explained her preparation for singing a solo with the choir in this way:

VC: The only thing that's on my mind is I'm praying. When you see me actually walking up to the mic, I'm praying. When you see me first stepping to the mic before I ever hit a note, if you observe, I'm praying. God, please, you gotta do this. Move me out the way. You sing for me. You sing through me. Let the people hear you, not me. That's the only thing that's on my mind. So it's basically, it's, it's humbling. It's humbling. It's like okay here I go. It's just me and you, God. You got to give it to me.

JS: Is that always the way you approached it?

VC: No, I think that happened as I grew in Christianity and started to actually go through, you know, trials and tribulations in my life, you know, as a young person. Before that it was more of, I hope I get this right. You know. Please don't let me mess up. It was, okay I'm gonna sing this. I'm gonna do the best job I can do. Now I don't even think about that. I don't even think let me not mess up. And it's not even a boastful thing, I just felt like I've been doing it so long it's not even about messing up. If I ask god to, you know, take over this, I'm not gonna mess up. If I just surrender to him and let him do it, you know, it's gonna come out the way he wants, and I don't have to worry about it.

Narrating her preparations for a solo, Vanessa ignores physiology and hones in on spirituality. She describes prayer, not vocal warmups. She puts her faith in God instead of breathing techniques.

Vanessa's descriptions of public worship illustrate some of the more significant relationships between performances of music and religion in this community. She also describes music in part as a practice that mediates her private prayer life and focuses people's minds on God in order to receive God's word:

VC: Sometimes when I don't even feel like praying, I'm singing, and I'm saying, "God, I don't really feel like talking to you, but I'll sing to you." Cause I just don't, you know, you just being honest as a Christian, sometimes you just don't feel like praying. Sometimes you just - you're thinking about stuff and you know you should pray but you just don't take that time at that point. You're not at a point where you're ready or willing to do so and it's just easier to sing. Sometimes once I've sung something in my mind or I've heard some music it makes it a little bit easier for me to

relax and get into that mode of I'm ready. I'm ready to talk to God. I'm ready to pray to God. Some I've observed that sometimes the music in church can get your mind where it needs to be. Like I was saying before, when you're thinking about bills or you're thinking about other things you're going through, sometimes the music can be so profound that it'll just take your mind off of it before you know, before you realize that you're not focused on that other stuff anymore and that you're focusing on God because you hear the music and it just kinda adds on. Once you hear the music you can hear the word or you can hear that message in the song because the music has taken your attention.

Vanessa describes music's power to clear her mind and, likewise, a congregation's minds of thoughts that would otherwise obstruct worship. She describes musicking in order to reorient a person's mind into a mode that is more conducive for talking to God or hearing the word. In these moments, musicking – by singing, humming, or even attending to music made by another – makes religion possible. It allows people to, in Vanessa's words, "forget about everything and just tune in with God." This singing is not a religious substitute for other music. It is a musical method for doing religion.

In the previous quote, Vanessa explains that sometimes it is "just easier to sing" than to perform her religion without music. In these times, the music "gets [her] mind where it needs to be," and it prepares her to focus on God and "hear the word." It is a religious catalyst, changing the person and the environment to make another performance of religion easier or even possible. At other times, the religioning music delivers the word directly. Corinthian's members and ministers generally describe listening to a sermon or studying the Bible directly as the best avenues for receiving the word of God, but Vanessa describes song as a way of ministering to some people who are, for whatever reason, unable to hear the sermon.

VC: Some people don't even want to hear the sermon. Some people's minds are so in another place, they wanna hear it, but their minds won't let them because, you know sometimes when you hear somebody talking your mind goes off somewhere else. Just like in a lecture, you know, your teacher begins, you think, you know, "I got this," and somewhere down the line you look in your notes when you get home and you're like, "How did I miss that?" because your mind was somewhere else. So I've had people ask me, you know, "You remember when Pastor Fuzz said blah blah blah?" When did he say that? My mind went somewhere else, whether it was a child crying or someone talking to me. But when there's a song going on, there are some people that just sit upright and they listen and they hear every word in that song. I can't explain that. I don't know why. They're not all music lovers, because I'm a music lover, so I hear the song. But I hear the sermon too because of where I am in my life with God, but some people just won't hear that word spoken, but they'll hear it sung in a song.

Music, as Vanessa describes it, is a way to hear God's word when a person cannot hear it in other ways.

There are a number of different reasons why someone might find it easier to receive a word in song, but Vanessa is very specific about why she *is* able to "hear the sermon." She attributes it to the state of her life with God, and she repeatedly draws connections between her development as a Christian and her musical development. The first question I asked Vanessa in our first interview was about the experience of soloing with the choir, and her answer began with a childhood spent in Sunday school:

JS: So I'd like to start by asking you what it's like to sing a solo in the choir.

VC: For me it is – Well I started out young because - You probably could say I can accredit that to Sunday school. When I was younger I played piano for the Sunday school. So where I'm going with this is I had many stepping stones to get to that point. I didn't start off singing. I started out - Sunday school – playing for the Sunday school. And then I did the speeches that we did for Easter and Christmas. I did that. And I think I was one of the youngest people to ever join the choir. It was almost what you could say a calling. I gotta sing. I gotta sing. So I was about nine years old with all these adults. It was what we called the junior choir at that time, but they were all older than me. And so they basically took me in and wrapped their arms around me and I was just like their step child. And so I started singing then. Probably two years after that I got my first lead part and I just knew - I'm gonna sing. I'm gonna sing.

Vanessa's narration of her early steps toward becoming a musical leader echoes Pastor Fuzz's narration of his gradual growth into a pastoral leader. Beginning as a young Sunday school student playing the piano and performing memorized speeches for special celebrations, she responded at a young age to what she now describes as a musical ministry. She describes being received warmly by the Junior Choir.

Although she does not mention it here, the congregation currently acknowledges the children's recitation of scripture, prayer, poetry, and other speeches at special holiday presentations by the Sunday school with an extraordinary level of enthusiasm. It seems quite likely that a young Vanessa Majors received just as much support and encouragement for her first public expressions of faith and courage then as the children do today. Hearing Vanessa discuss her multiple musical roles as a director, as a soloist, and as a member of the choir, the constant framing of music as ministry becomes undeniable. She refers to her time musicking as her time with God. She articulates time and time again an approach to music that is undeniably religioning; she relegates the shape, form, and fashion of her exceptional musical talent and the sense of self-importance that such talent might imply to the "blah blah

blah.” The music department at Corinthian is not a farm system for American Idol; it is a branch of the larger church that uses music extensively to execute and understand its mission.

Notably, the musician also describes his musicking in terms of religious ministry. Harmon explained to me that his primary responsibility as the musician is to organize the music department of the church. When I asked him to explain the music department’s responsibilities, he replied:

HS: The music department is responsible for delivering the word of god to people who would not necessarily receive it through pastor fuzz or any of the other ministers. The music in the black church is very important. Most people only go to church to hear the music, so we have the responsibility of waking people up, for one, lifting people’s spirits and getting them ready and prepared to receive the word of god.

“The musician” describes his department’s responsibilities in terms of delivering “the Word of God” to people. He and they deliver the word directly (and musically). Their musicking draws many people into the churches on Sunday morning. It prepares those people to receive the preacher. As much as Harmon is responsible for managing the technical and aesthetic details of a mostly-volunteer musical ensemble, he is explicitly engaged in a religious enterprise. As he manages the choirs’ musical styles and individual song choices, he does so with specific regard for the religious implications.

HS: We’ve gone more to the contemporary gospel, I’d say. We’re still trying to keep traditional gospel alive, but before I came here, a lot of the younger youth in the church and a lot of the younger children did not want to sing with the older adults because the type of music they wanted to sing and the type of music they only sung was let’s say the old time religion music. And necessarily, the youth could not relate. Being a youth myself, being a young man, I like to hear the old and the new. So what I try to do – I try to get a mix of the old and a mix of the new and kinda put it all together. So we’re not just singing one style, one type of music. And I want to take that a little bit farther, and add another aspect and start singing some of the spirituals of the church, but I’ll let you ask me about that later. We’ve progressed, and we’re growing, and the choir is more spirit-filled.

JS: What’s good about diversity of style?

HS: Because people are different. This church is made up of different people, and we all have to understand that everyone doesn’t relate to a certain flavor or certain style of music. Everyone doesn’t receive the spirit in the same way. There are different songs that have different words and different messages that speak to people in a different type of way. That’s why we always make sure we try to change up the tempo of the songs. We have a fast one, a slow one, things like that. Slow it down so people can really hear the words. We have a fast one to wake people up so they can get excited, and you know, be ready to praise the Lord. The traditional types of

music - although I really haven't been focusing on them till now, I've been trying to get the choir to a level where they'll be able to understand this type of music – but it's important to me because that's what I was raised on.

Harmon's attention to the impact of specific songs goes beyond the broad concerns of style and tempo that might influence a concert's set list. He slows things down "so people can really hear the words," and he includes faster ones that will get people excited and "ready to praise the Lord." He also pays particular attention to the religious messages of the songs' lyrics and considers the ways in which they might compliment and support the message of a particular sermon.

HS: There are certain things that a minister says, certain topics he brings up, certain points that the minister is trying to drive home. So if Reverend Fuzz keeps saying, you know, "We oughta love Jesus. We need to worship him." And, you know, he keeps driving that point back. And he'll say something else, but he'll keep bringing that back. And say something else and bringing that back. In my mind, I'm thinking, "What song does the choir know that it's comfortable with that we can help further drive this point home so that after he sits down it can be like a continuation of the sermon through the choir?" So I have about three different binders and papers everywhere - I'm so disorganized, but I try to make sure that we have a song that's going along with what he's talking about. And most of the hymns do that, but the choir is not familiar with a lot of the hymns. So, I just can't, you know, break out a new hymn on them, because they'll look at me and say, "Harmon, now, we don't know that." And then I'll be singing the whole thing by myself, trying to play it, and trying to remember it by myself. So it's by his scripture and key things that Rev. Fuzz says that kinda turn on that light and say, "Well hey, I need to get something that relates to that."

This willingness to change plans in order to follow a preacher's lead sets Harmon apart as a particularly excellent musician according to Vanessa Crony's assessment. She ended an interview with me by explaining how much she appreciated Harmon being "in tune" – not with the harmonies of the sound, but with the spirit of the service.

VC: Another thing that I like about Harmon that I haven't seen in any other musicians except for maybe the ministers is he's in tune with what's going on in the service. You know, some are just tinkering around. They'll be playing while something's going on or they – you have to go get them and tell them, "Hey, you know, the pastor's preaching. Come on let's get back in here." You don't have to look for him. He's in there. And when it's time for him to play, he plays. And I don't care what you've rehearsed. If the spirit has led him to do something else, we're doing something else. If Reverend Fuzz has preached about something that had nothing to do with the song we were going to sing after the sermon he will totally change the song. Whether we've rehearsed it or not. Or if he just feels like it's something – or, "I'll just sing it as a solo." He'll do that. And I think that is so appropriate. You know? So many people don't do that. Just like, "Well we've rehearsed this and that's what we're going to sing." Not him. He'll change it up in a minute just because that's just the way, you know, it's like the spirit led it that way. And he'll – he's in tune with that. And I like that about him. I really do.

While Harmon suggests that the choir members might be upset by his tendency to change a song to follow the spirit or the preacher's lead, Vanessa describes it as one of his best qualities as a musician. When faced with a conflict between the musical plan and a ministerial opportunity to follow the pastor's leadership, Harmon makes the musical choice that best supports the goals of religioning, and in Vanessa's expert opinion, "that is so appropriate."

Harmon Stockdale, whose full name is Harmon Stockdale, Jr., has a lot of practice following a preacher's lead. He is the son of the Rev. Dr. Harmon Stockdale, Sr., whose introduction to "The Questions of a Fool" I used in the previous chapter. Not surprisingly, Harmon acknowledges his father's religioning as an important influence on him, both in the past and in the present:

HS: My father has been a Baptist preacher since before I was alive. So I was brought up - him singing the hymns, him encouraging the spirituals at his church. Even in his church where he's pastoring now, he has five or six different choirs. He has a choir that concentrates on the anthems, the spirituals, the hymns. He has a choir that focuses on the older type of music, the traditional gospel, the Senior Choir. Another choir, the youth choir, concentrates on contemporary music - music of Kirk Franklin, Ty Trebek, things like that. And then a Young Adult Choir that concentrates on music, that genre that's right in the middle, what I would consider to be the more adult contemporary type of music. And then he has a group, The Brotherhood, that sings the quartet music, and, you know brings that to life. He even has a group that recites the hymns of the church without music - just type of a spoken word type of hymn to a beat. Recites it and with a beat carries that melody. So my father has always encouraged this and it's kinda been instilled in me. Cause he started out as a church musician, choir director, type of things like that. So as I was growing up, not only under these different types of genres, but growing up with him and under his tutelage, and things like that and seeing him and the ways he'd react kind of, you know, opened my eyes and opened my ears to the different kinds of music. And I have a love of all types of music, but I believe in the church we should never forget where we've come from and we should never forget those old songs that brought our grandmothers over and brought our grandfathers over and brought us to the point where we are today. So I would like to see that more and more in the church, and hopefully as we get into this new year, we can start doing things like that.

Taking Harmon and Vanessa at their word, the responsibilities of "the musician" are at least as religious as they are musical. He is valued for being in tune with the spirit of worship at least as much as for being in tune when he sings. He makes musical decisions with regard to the religious consequences, and when his plans conflict with the leadership of the pastor, the preacher, or the spirit, he finds a way to keep the music in tune with the worship.

The Choir

VC: [The choir is] the cheering section. We're going to encourage you. We're gonna let you know that we're with you.

JS: So what else is the choir?

VC: The choir's the praying section. We will pray for anybody. We pray for one another. We pray for other people. For instance, after choir rehearsal Elois may make comments about who's going through something in the church. It's not necessarily a choir member. They just may say, you know, "Such and such's family member is sick. We need to pray for them." Because that's just part of the ministry, and it's not necessarily related to the choir. I think it's just where we are in spirituality because of we've been singing so long, you know, and together and then being together, keeping up with one another. Somebody in the choir is gonna always be connected to somebody else in the church that's not in the choir. So, you know the chain just keeps going, you know. It's like a linked chain. It just keeps going. If you know somebody in the church that's going through something, well we all pray for that person or that family. What else is the choir? Let's see, we're the cheering section and we pray for everybody. We're ministry of song. And we're just a big family. Just a big family.

Ostensibly, a choir is a musical organization. In Corinthian, as in most African American churches, the choir is one of the largest and most obvious organizations. It is one of Corinthian's largest ministries and one of its most active auxiliaries. It is a well-oiled machine that performs a musical ministry at every Sunday service and at a variety of other events around town, following Corinthian's pastor into the community and providing musical accompaniment to his prophetic ministry. The choir fills the space around the preacher. Literally, figuratively, musically, and religiously, they have his back.



Figure 51: Corinthian's Mass Choir backing up their pastor



Figure 52: Pastor Fuzz with the choir behind him

As Vanessa explains it, the choir is more than just a musical organization. She calls the choir “the cheering section...the praying section...a chain [that] keeps going... a big family...and a ministry of song.” Corinthian’s choirs are not just musical organizations, they are *ministries* of song. Vanessa makes it clear that the choir’s primary purpose is *not* primarily to be a professional caliber choral group or even a musical outlet for amateur singers, but to be a ministry of song in support of the pastoral ministry. The choir brings a musical message to the congregation, but their primary purpose is to prepare those congregants to be nourished by the word of God when it is preached in the sermon. As is the case for the individual musicians I address earlier, the choir is engaged not only in compelling performances of music, but in the performance of religious ministry through music – the choir is a musicking ministry and a religioning ensemble.

Like every other individual and organization at Corinthian, the choir theoretically gives honor first to God as the head of their lives and then to their pastor as the head of the church. Under the leadership of Choir President Elois Outlaw, Minister of Music Harmon Stockdale, and Directors Vanessa Croney and Rev. Gleason Rogers, Corinthian’s choir serves as one of the most obvious examples of this ideal put into action. Harmon describes the choir and the music’s role in relation to the pastor as a critical part of their identity.

HS: I think my official title is minister of music. I've been known as the piano player, choir director, but I think my official title is the minister of music. And the way I understand that title is that I'm in charge of the music department here, making sure that the music is both spiritual and uplifting and to make sure that it is in tune with the service and with the spirit of this church. Also the role is to make sure that choir members are together and on one accord, make sure that everything is functioning as one body, as one unit, as the music department here in this church. So my primary responsibility is to the music department of this church, organizing it in the way and the vision of Pastor Fuzz, not only his vision, but bringing to life some of my own ideas and first okaying it with Reverend Fuzz because everything we do falls under his leadership and has to be first brought to his sight to make sure that it's okay with him.



Figure 53: Harmon Stockdale accompanying Pastor Fuzz at a Saturday rehearsal

During a Sunday morning service, the choir's primary context for performing in worship, honoring God and supporting the pastor means preparing the congregation and the preacher for the sermon.

VC: Everything the choir does before preaching is leading up to the sermon. The choir sings to get your mind ready for the sermon. We're not the sermon. We are a message, but we are not the sermon. The word. The food that you need. The nourishment that you need to get you through the rest of the week or whatever you use the word for. We are not that, but we are getting you there so that when you hear it you'll be ready for it. You'll be able to receive it, you know, I think, fully.

Harmon takes this musical responsibility for preparing people for the sermon one step further as he elaborates on the choir and the music ministry's broader role in bringing novice

Christians, nominal Christians, and non-Christians into church and preparing them to really hear a preacher's sermon:

HS: [I]f a member would just come into church and just sit down and all of a sudden someone would get up to preach, well, most of the time they would not be ready to receive that. There's some kind of preparation, some kind of ushering in the spirit. We [the music department] need to get the spirit here, set the atmosphere, so when Rev. Fuzz gets up to preach he does not have a hard time trying to deliver his message, trying to make people understand, because he can get up knowing that the spirit's already here and that all he has to do is speak to the ears that are already in tune with the spirit and here to listen.

Harmon and Vanessa each take care to explain their role in Corinthian's choirs and the roles of the choirs and music ministries generally as being in service to the pastoral role. Harmon emphasizes Pastor Fuzz's role as the chief minister as an important way of defining his own substantial responsibility as music minister. Vanessa explains repeatedly and emphatically that *everything* that the choir does for the first hour and a half of the service is in support of the sermon. The choir's leaders clearly share Du Bois's assessment that describes the preacher as "the center," "the boss," and a singularly important player in the sermon – the spiritual climax of the service.

The choir collapses some of the distance between the pulpit and the pews every Sunday through music as it focuses the congregation's attention on worship and preparing them for the sermon. It also bridges that gap over lifetimes by offering stepping stones between congregational membership and some of the most demanding religious specialties in the church. Vanessa Crony and Pastor Fuzz clearly describe experience as members of choirs as formative experiences that helped them develop as Christians and grow into their callings.

VC: Usually when you find a man that sings really well, he's usually a preacher too. So we don't end up keeping them, you know? Dr. Richardson, before he ever preached, he was [in the choir].

Vanessa focuses here on Dr. Ray Richardson (still an active member of the choir) because we were discussing the relative scarcity of men in the choir, but she could say the same thing about most other preachers at Corinthian. It is also true that many of Corinthian's favorite "musicians" have ended up leaving that role to pursue preaching and pastoral ministries.

VC: One of the hardest things that has been for our choirs is keeping musicians. It's been hard to keep musicians. Because – the ones that we've lost that we've just really adored have always moved on to what their higher calling has been. We've had two ministers. Remember Jaymes Mooney. We had one before that – It was another choir, but Reverend Rainsberry. He got here. He was from Africa, and he ended up preaching and getting his own church. I mean they ended up doing other things. And there's been a couple who just was here for the pay. And then they

went off but it's hard to find musician that's not all about the money. And the ones, like I said, the ones who are not, they have a higher calling on their lives anyway. That's just a stepping stone to get to where they're supposed to be.

Rev. Mooney, Rev. Rainsberry, and even Harmon's father, the Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr. spent time as music ministers.

At Corinthian, the music functions to bring the congregation into communion with God, but communion with God, either in prayer as demonstrated above or through study of the word as explained below, is a part of preparation for music. Vanessa explained this when I asked her about the tendency of choir members to be some of the most demonstratively supportive members of the congregation during song, prayer, and preaching:

VC: ...the songs are ministry, so we can't sing about anything that we don't know about. So we have to study the word. We have to know, you know, there's been times when the younger people, for instance, Another Level Choir comes to the Mass Choir, and we're giving out words and you might find some older people too, that we may give out words to a song and they're like, "What?" And you're basically finishing a sentence that's in the scripture but they've never heard of it before. And we're like, "It's in the Bible!" They're like, "What? I'll draw all men unto what?" And we're like, "It's in the Bible." So here we go to the word. It's right here. So then singing, basically what we're singing is the word in song. So you're singing the word in song and a lot of times the prayer ends up being from the word or we've sang a song about something somebody's prayed about or for instance we'll sing a song about prayer changes things or something you may hear somebody praying about something that we've sang about so it's just all inclusive, it's almost like, you know, you've just got to cheer everybody on. It's almost like saying I know what you're talking about. I got it, you know? I've heard it. I've been there. I've sang that before. So it's like, you know, "Preach, Reverend." You know? "Pray, so and so. I've been there. I've lived that with you. I understand what you're going through." So the choir has probably got, you know, the preaching and the praying all mixed up in the songs. So it's kinda easier for them.

Song, prayer, and preaching, as Vanessa describes them, become related through process and content. They come into focus as interrelated methods of religioneering out loud or musicking in relation to the word. Song prepares the worshipers to receive the word, but study of the word also becomes a part of preparing to sing. Music sets the table for the sermon, and the sermon provides opportunities to hear old songs in new ways. The music is simultaneously a powerful ministry unto itself and a "stepping stone" that helps congregants and ministers to prepare for deeper participation in worship and ministry. Faith and musicality develop in tandem as the preparation for singing draws a singer into scripture and the disciplined study of scripture changes a singer's perspective on performing religion.

Mitchell celebrates the entire congregation without distinction, but the choir that Vanessa describes is a community within the congregation, an elite praying, musicking, scripture-studying corps of congregants. They are a concentrated, organized pocket of support for soloists of all stripes – musical, homiletical or otherwise – fully capable of serving as the freeing and affirming dialogue partner that Mitchell describes.

VC: One thing I can say about Corinthian’s Mass Choir is if nobody else in church is praising God, we are praising him all by ourselves. We are having service all by ourselves. We’re having a praise party in that choir by ourselves. If nobody else is saying, “Sing Elois! Sing Vanessa!” we’re backing each other up. We’re supporting each other. Saturday the only difference is stopping the song and perfecting the song in the middle of it versus Sunday singing it all the way through. But we get just as happy on Saturday as we do on Sunday when we’re singing.

JS: Could you tell me more about the “Sing Elois!”?

VC: The thing that we do - the support?

JS: Yes.

VC: It’s more of a — Oh man, I - It’s — I guess it’s like — First of all, okay there’s two different things. When somebody you know that can just really really sing, you know? You just anticipate the song and even then — so you’re automatically like “Sing! Just sing cause I know you’re gonna sing.” So we just kinda boost them on. Just like, you know, watching a football game or watching a baseball game, you know, you see somebody running — they’re already running, but you’re just like, “Run! Run! Run!” Well it’s the same thing. It’s like, “Sing! Sing!” And you’re thinking “Oh she’s singing! Oh she is really singing this song!” And even when it’s not somebody that particularly is somebody that you would label as a soloist, and they’re singing, they’re doing it from their heart and they’re doing it for god and they’re doing it for ministry and that’s just our way of giving them encouragement and saying, you know, “You go girl. You do that thing. You give God the glory and give God the praise and don’t worry about nobody else because we’re all with you.” You know? “I’m with you.” And it’s also another way of saying, “Amen” to the song, you know. It’s just kind of a boost of encouragement thing that we do for one another, you know. And that’s a part of that fellowship that we have. You know? That’s another part of that.

Vanessa describes the choir as a group that performs its affirming, encouraging dialogue with preachers, singers, and anyone else who happens to be doing something for God. She identifies two important contexts for providing this support – celebration that acknowledges an expert act of ministry and celebration that encourages a novice act of ministry.

Like the choir, the congregation gets excited when a musical performance is truly exceptional, but they offer equal, and sometimes greater, support when a less-experienced singer sings “from their heart...for God and...for ministry.” Tara Hereford gets thunderous support from the congregation when she sings because of the heightened experience of worship that her singing consistently evokes. When young Eboni Crouney

stepped forward for her first solos with the choir, she received extraordinarily enthusiastic support, not because anyone expected a ten-year old girl to perform with the musical presence, power and control that an experienced singer like Tara exhibits, but because of a combination of excitement about “their Eboni” singing for the Lord and their understanding that Eboni might need encouragement in a way that a more experienced performer would not. As Eboni sang, her voice trembled slightly, a function of nerves and inexperience. Musically, her performance was strong for a young girl, but understandably different from the professional caliber performances often delivered by leads with fully mature voices and decades of experience. For the congregation and particularly the choir, however, the performance was worthy of celebration.

As in the case of Pastor Fuzz’s early, self-described “not good” sermons, the congregation affirmed Eboni’s early efforts “anyway.” However, Vanessa’s explanation of the two types of support challenges the idea of the congregation or the choir supporting novices *anyway*, suggesting instead that they support these novices *because* they are inexperienced. The idea that the congregation affirms novice performers – musical or homiletical – “anyway” or in spite of their technical flaws misunderstands the congregational role. The congregation responds in the moment out of recognition that they bear the greater responsibility for this particular performance. They respond with encouragement afterward in appreciation of the faithful performance by the novice soloist and in an effort to nurture that performer’s growth. The dozen or so masterful musical performers at Corinthian, the select few whose singing almost always elevates the worship and regularly evokes shouting and heightened experiences, also began as novices. At a church like Corinthian where multiple generations of families worship, some members of the congregation remember these first performances from today’s powerhouses.

Singing a Sermon

The African American pulpit is famous for the poetry and music of its preachers’ sermons. At the beginning of the 21st century, no preaching traditions in American Christianity are more vibrant or more consistently associated with excellence in oral artistry than those of the African American pulpit. The most expert participants in these traditions attend to the rhythm and melody of individual words as well as the broader structure of sermons that regularly stretch past a half an hour. They attend to the sound of a sermon as well as its

substance. They might tune – humming or singing a pitch between words. Some whoop – melismatically stretching individual words and syllables into extended series of separate pitches. Many of these techniques exist in white churches as well as black churches (see Titon 1988), and not every preacher, community, or even denomination within the broader black church use these techniques routinely. I initially believed that a section on singing a sermon would focus on the musicality of the black preacher’s tuning and whooping and the typical congregational and instrumental accompaniment in the crescendo towards the celebration that marks the climax of most sermons at Corinthian. After a couple of years at Corinthian, however, I believe that the singing of sermons begins long before a sermon turns toward Calvary and celebration.

More often than not a sermon at Corinthian begins with a song. An introduction of a speaker will end with, “The next voice you’ll hear, after a selection from the choir...” or Pastor Fuzz will sing “The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow.” Sometimes the choir will sing *and* the preacher will begin with a song. The music here is more than a placeholder or a formality; it is as crucial to the performance of the sermon as the reading of scripture. No one at Corinthian sings the congregation into a sermon better than their pastor. Listen to the music that began the sermon from the previous chapter and hear Pastor Fuzz inviting the congregation into a musical dialogue that carries through into the early spoken minutes of the sermon.

**Recorded Example 9 – “The Lord Will Make A Way Somehow”
Pastor Enoch Fuzz and Congregation (3 June 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD1(9)]**

- 1 *Like a ship that’s tossed and driven* [yeah] [yeah]
- 2 *Battered* [*shouting] *by an angry sea* [*shouting]
- 3 *When the storm of life is raging* [yes sir]
- 4 *And the fury fall on me* [oh yeah]
- 5 *You know I wonder wonder wonder wonder what have I done* [alright] [come on now reverend]
- 6 *To make this race* **ha-a-ard** *to run*
- 7 *I say to my soul I say* **so-o-oul** *don’t worry*
- 8 *I know the lord will* _ *Won’t god make a way somehow?* [yeah] [alright]
- 9 *Like a ship that’s tossed and driven*
- 10 **Ohhhh** *battered by an* **a-a-angry** *sea*
- 11 **Ohh** *when the* **sto-o-orm** *of life* **ra-a-aging**
- 12 *And the fury fall on me*
- 13 **Ohhhh** *I wonder wonder wonder lord what have I-I-I done*

14 *To make this old race so **ha-a-ard***
 15 *Oh I say to my soul **so-o-oul** don't worry*
 16 *I know the lord will _ Anybody know God will make a way? [yeah] [alright] [yeah yeah yeah]*
 17 *I try and do my best [yeah] in service [alright] [come on]*
 18 *O-oh I try _ live the best that I can*
 19 ***Ohh** but every time I choose _ do the right thing*
 20 *You know evil pressing on every hand [yeah]*
 21 ***Ohhh** I look up [look up] I wonder why [alright] [yes sir]*
 22 *Good fortune [yeah] **pa-a-ass** me by [yeah]*
 23 *Oh I say to my soul [yes sir] **so-o-oul** be patient [be patient]*
 24 *I know the lord will [yes he will] Won't he make a way [yes] somehow? [yeah] [yes]*
 25 ***Ohhhh** I know the lord [yeah] will make a way [will make a way] somehow [yes]*
 26 *O-o-oh when beneath the **cross** I bow [yes sir]*
 27 *He will take away [yes he will] **a-a-all** your sorrow*
 28 *If you let him have your burdens right now*
 29 ***Ohhhh** and when the load **bo-o-ows** so heavy*
 30 ***Ohhhh** the weight **shown** on your brow*
 31 *There's a sweet relief [yeah] [sweet]*
 32 *There's a sweet relief [oh yeah]*
 33 *There's a sweet relief [yes there is]*
 34 *There's a sweet relief*
 35 *There's a sweet relief **yea-a-ahhhhh** in knowing oh I know the lord will*
 36 *The lord will [yes lord] Won't he make a way? [yes he will]*
 37 *Mhmmm [oh yes]*
 38 *Mhmmm [oh yes] [yes sir] [oh yes]*
 39 *He made a way for me [oh yes] [oh lord]*
 40 *He took away [oh lord] **a-a-all** of my problems*
 41 *You know I gave him all of my burdens*
 42 ***Ohhhh** and when the load [yes] bows down heavy [yes] [yes lord] [alright it's alright]*
 43 *And the weight [alright] shown on your brow [yes] Somebody say*
 44 *[There's a sweet relief] Somebody say*
 45 *[There's a sweet relief] Oh yes there is*
 46 *[There's a sweet relief] Mhmmm*
 47 *[There's a sweet relief] Mhmmm*
 48 *[There's a sweet relief] There's a sweet relief*
 49 *[There's a sweet relief] There's a sweet relief yeah*
 50 ***Ohhh** in knowing I know that the lord will god make a way [somehow]*
 51 Amen
 52 Amen
 53 Amen [oh yes] [oh lord]
 54 *I know the lord*
 55 *Will make a way [oh yes] [yes he will]*
 56 *Yes he will [oh yes] [yes he will]*
 57 *I know the lord [the lord]*

58 *Will make a way*
 59 *Ye-e-es [he will] he will [yeah] [come on preacher]*
 60 *He'll make a way [yeah]*
 61 *For me and you [oh yeah]*
 62 *Go-o-od² will surely [take it down take it back]*
 63 *Carry you through [yeah]*
 64 *I know the lord [oh yeah]*
 65 *I know the lord [oh yeah]*
 66 *I know the lord [oh yeah] [oh yeah]*
 67 *Ohhh won't god make a way?*
 68 *Ohhhhh [alright reverend alright]*
 69 *Amen [oh yes]*
 70 *Amen [oh yes] [yes]*
 71 In the eleventh chapter of the book of hebrews... [*continues into "Where Is Your Faith?"
 See Ch. 2 for full transcription]

Listening to Pastor Fuzz guide the congregation through the song, it is easy to hear the parallels with the sermonic dialogue. It is actually here in the song that he establishes the pattern that will follow through into the sermon. Beginning with one of his signature songs, Pastor Fuzz refocuses the congregation's energy into a clear dialogue with questions. He asks, "Won't God make a way?" and "Anybody know God will make a way?" and the congregation responds accordingly. Actually, the congregation has been answering that question since he began singing. As he continues singing, some members of the congregation sing along with their pastor. Others echo his lyrics (line 25) or call them out ahead of him (line 59), or fill the spaces left by his silences with affirmations and encouragement. After several minutes, Pastor Fuzz further focuses the congregation's efforts, directing them as a group to repeat "There's a sweet relief" (lines 44-49). This is more than a feel-good, sonic exercise. Before he even begins reading the biblical text for the sermon, Pastor Fuzz and the congregation have sung the core of his message. The sung answer, "I know the Lord will make a way somehow" precedes the preached question, "Where is your faith?" Once again, the response precedes the call at Corinthian, framing God's intervention in Aunt Caroline's crisis as a virtual certainty. The part of the sermon following the song simply elaborates on the theme, offering a fresh example in support of the familiar message of encouragement and comfort offered by the Thomas Dorsey classic.

² "God" (not "good")

Going beyond the thematic connection, Pastor Fuzz even pulls the lyrics into his sermon, exhorting the congregation in the first minutes that:

It ought to be somebody here that remember that there was a time in your life _ when all you had [Alright] [Was faith.] was your faith. [Yeah] [Come on now.]
The only answer _ that you had to your struggle, _ the only solution _ that you had to your problem _ was [Faith.] "I know the Lord will make a way." [Yes Sir!] [Yes.]

Later, he puts these words of wisdom into Aunt Caroline's mouth as she responds to her inability to get to Mississippi to take care of her little girl.

And she went down on her knees and she said,
"Now Lord.
Now Lord.
Lord, well you know I never was able to get an education,
but **Lord** I wanted my little girl to have a better way.
Now Lord," is what she prayed.
"Yes, I need you to come on and _ make a way _ out of no way."

By the end of the sermon, Pastor Fuzz is tuning and whooping and shouting that he will trust in God, but before he starts preaching he has already performed that faith in song. He sang his faith that the Lord will make a way. He sang his sermon, and the congregation sang it with him.

The Musicking Congregation

Du Bois describes "the Music" as "the one true *expression* of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope," but musicking at Corinthian goes far beyond simply expressing "human life and longing" (134). To paraphrase a statement that would be familiar to members at Corinthian and any number of other Christian churches, "Musicking changes things." At Corinthian, musicking is a way of being prayerful. It is a way of preparing for an encounter with God's word or an encounter with God. It is a way of connecting with others, a way of touching and sometimes healing the minds, bodies, and souls of others. It is a ministry, a way of being involved in God's plan for God's world and God's people. It is a stepping stone, not to a record contract, but to a deeper personal spirituality and potentially to a more prominent role in church ministry. At Corinthian and elsewhere, musicking and religioning overlap. Sometimes religion offers people an opportunity to experience music just as it sometimes offers them opportunities to experience community, dignity, and authority that might otherwise be difficult to find. Religion also offers opportunities for some people to

specialize in certain forms of musicking (as well as other specialized roles as leaders, mentors, community builders, etc.), but the ones who excel in musicking at Corinthian seem to share a common understanding that they musick as a way of religioning, not the other way around.

As a ministry, the music points directly to the congregation. The congregation draws nourishment from the songs. The congregation sings its devotional on Wednesday night. The congregation comes into being through song and spoken word on Sunday mornings. The congregation sings the sermon with their pastor. They carry the music with them through the week, humming songs remembered from Sunday and songs passed down from slavery as they religion their ways through the joys and sorrows of daily life. Music draws potential congregation members to the church, as Harmon explained and Pastor Fuzz acknowledges from time to time in his sermons

EF: It's said that we want to use our choirs
To bring men to church
You'll tell them
They sure can sing
But don't you know folk don't need a choir
Folk don' t need a song
They need a savior

(Wonderful Worship – 5 Sept. 2007)

Pastor Fuzz is not arguing that the music is unimportant. Instead he points out the fact that music *as music* is insufficient. At Corinthian, music is a method for doing religion, performing the relationships between God and God's congregation out loud.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONGREGATION'S FRENZY

Finally the Frenzy of "Shouting," when the Spirit of the Lord passed by, and, seizing the devotee, made him mad with supernatural joy, was the last essential of Negro religion and the one more devoutly believed in than all the rest. It varied in expression from the silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan to the mad abandon of physical fervor, –the stamping, shrieking, and shouting, the rushing to and fro and wild waving of arms, the weeping and laughing, the vision and the trance. All this is nothing new in the world, but as old as religion, as Delphi and Endor. And so firm a hold did it have on the Negro that many generations firmly believed that without this visible manifestation of the God there could be no true communion with the Invisible.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903:135)

Du Bois's Frenzy is obviously grounded in the congregation – the massed devotees through whom the spirit passes. As a scholar, Du Bois seems to be uncomfortable addressing the frenzy on its own terms. He writes about it as though it was an element of a fading history rather than a living feature of the Black Church of his time. The Music "*is* that plaintive rhythmic melody" and the Preacher "*is* the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil." But the Frenzy "*was* the last essential of Negro religion," one that he credits with an unmatched hold on previous generations, but deemphasizes in relation his own. Du Bois describes the Frenzy as something held in common by religions throughout time even as he distances himself from it. How could he have done otherwise? Even a century later, it is difficult to acknowledge the spirit of ecstatic worship within the culture of a skeptical, sometimes desperately empirical academy. But at Corinthian and elsewhere, there are still silent rapt countenances and low murmurs and moans. There is still occasionally stamping, shrieking, shouting, rushing to and fro, and wild waving of arms. At Corinthian, even the ethnographer laughs and weeps from time to time. The Frenzy endures, and Corinthian and other spirit-filled congregations still celebrate with supernatural joy when the spirit passes by.

First Impressions: Awe and Shock

Those who have not thus witnessed the frenzy of a Negro revival in the untouched backwoods of the South can but dimly realize the religious feeling of the slave; as described, such scenes appear grotesque and funny, but as seen they are awful.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903:134)

Even in the heart of twenty-first-century Nashville, the sounds and sights of a congregant in the throws of shouting can be overwhelming. When witnessed for the first time, such a dramatic performance of the frenzy can startle an uninformed observer. One person yelling, screaming, crying, waving her arms, or thrashing about, seemingly out of control, demands some kind of explanation. A half-dozen people shouting and waving their hands in the midst of scores of others weeping, laughing, clapping, and otherwise contributing to the energy and emotion of the scene makes an exponentially stronger impression on a witness. Such a performance proclaims unambiguously that something extraordinary – either extraordinarily good or extraordinarily bad – is happening; the all-important distinction between a great or terrible something is a matter of interpretation.

Du Bois's apparent reluctance to link the frenzy too directly to his generation of African Americans may be related to negative associations around shouting that neither an African American academic nor the vast population of "black folk" could afford to bear at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Preacher stepped out from behind the veil to participate in the politics and protest movements of the twentieth century. The Music crossed over from gospel and race records to reshape American popular music. By contrast, in part due to the voluntary racial and socio-economic segregation that America still performs faithfully every Sunday morning, the fluidity, energy, and specific actions of the Frenzy are only slightly more familiar to outsiders in 2008 than they were to Du Bois in 1903. Du Bois was probably right when he wrote that people who have not witnessed the frenzy are likely to understand it imperfectly, as through a glass but darkly. He seems not to have considered the related proposition that an account from a first-time witness, one overwhelmed by an event beyond the limits of his imagination, might only exacerbate the confusion.

Before offering his assessment that the frenzy cannot be understood from description alone, Du Bois narrates *his* first experience with "a Southern Negro revival" in a grand literary style:

It was out in the country, far from home, far from my foster home, on a dark Sunday night. The road wandered from our rambling log-house up the stony bed of a creek, past wheat and corn, until we could hear dimly across the fields a rhythmic cadence of song, - soft, thrilling, powerful, that swelled and died sorrowfully in our ears. I was a country schoolteacher then, fresh from the East, and had never seen a Southern Negro revival. To be sure, we in Berkshire were not perhaps as stiff and formal as they in Suffolk of olden time; yet we were very quiet and subdued, and I know not what would have happened those clear Sabbath mornings had some one punctuated the sermon with a wild scream, or interrupted the long prayer with a loud Amen! And so most striking to me, as I approached the village and the little plain church perched aloft, was the air of intense excitement that possessed that mass of black folk. A sort of suppressed terror hung in the air and seemed to seize us,- a pythian madness, a demoniac possession, that lent terrible reality to song and word. The black and massive form of the preacher swayed and quivered as the words crowded to his lips and flew at us in singular eloquence. The people moaned and fluttered, and then the gaunt-checked brown woman beside me suddenly leaped straight into the air and shrieked like a lost soul, while round about came wail and groan and outcry, and a scene of human passion such as I had never conceived before. (ibid. 133-4)

Du Bois evokes the trope of the hero's journey as he sets out, not only far from home, but even far from his foster home, crossing creek beds and passing fields, following the whispers of rhythmic song not only into "far far away," but also into the transcendent "once upon a time" time of myth and ritual.

For all his eloquence and extraordinary intellect, Du Bois becomes trapped in himself as he tries to represent this experience to his readers. He clings to his education, retreating behind arcane references to Greek religion that remind Du Bois and his readers that he is civilized. He cites his urban, Yankee origins, reminding readers that he comes from north of the Mason-Dixon Line, from the reserved religious sensibilities of Berkshire where an "Amen" uttered mid-prayer would be an unimaginable interruption. He notes the intense excitement that possessed the other people assembled there while marking himself as separate from that "mass of black folk," an outsider impressed by the excitement while remaining separate from it. Still, the power of the frenzy is such that even Du Bois – "fresh from the East" and distinct from the crowd in one sentence – includes himself in the "us" that gets seized by "a sort of suppressed terror" in the next.

Du Bois feels the power of the frenzy, and this seems to evoke both excitement and fear. He fears the unpredictability that confronts him in the woman's "sudden" leap. He fears the apparent loss of control that he implies through the use of words like "demoniac"

and “lost soul” that he uses to interpret and explain the behavior of the people around him. He experiences the “wail and groan and outcry” as a thing that surrounds him. He is confronted and overwhelmed by a “terrible reality” grounded in song and word and a “human passion” that exceeds his capacity for imagination and interpretation. Nearly every word that Du Bois writes about this experience marks the frenzy as something strange, a phenomenon so disjunct from his ordinary experiences as to be nearly, if not fully, unintelligible. Of course, Du Bois’s first experience of the frenetic climax of Black Church worship is not unique. It is notable specifically because it is so typical of a first encounter with a congregation seized by “a pythian madness” or, as Corinthian’s members might describe it, the Spirit.

The frenzy provoked similar reactions on a national scale more than a century after Du Bois’s country revival during the 2008 Democratic Presidential nominating process. When fragments of sermons from Senator Barack Obama’s pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr. erupted onto 24-hour cable news networks, the pastor’s frenzied preaching and his congregation’s frenzied response to that preaching panicked many white Americans. The text of the most incendiary moments of Wright’s sermons – particularly the several seconds when the pastor repeated the phrase “God damn America” – might have made the news if it had been preached in any presidential candidate’s home church, but the frenzy at Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ transformed an unexceptional prophetic critique of American hegemony and institutionalized forms of racism into a spectacle that captivated and terrified segments of white America nearly five years after Rev. Wright preached the sermon at issue, “Confusing God and Government.” Two-minute samples from thirty-plus-minute sermons prompted weeks of punditry and public debate that repeatedly portrayed one of Chicago’s leading Black churches as a dangerous fringe group of racism and anti-Americanism.

In his speech, “A More Perfect Union,” delivered several days after Rev. Wright’s sermons made the news, Senator Obama offered the American public some context in which to place the preacher’s statements and the congregation’s frenzied response. Like a good ethnographer or a good preacher, he used a story, in this case a narration of his first visit to Trinity drawn from his book, *Dreams of My Father* (1995):

People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up into the rafters....And in that single note - hope! - I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside

the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories - of survival, and freedom, and hope - became our story, my story; the blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears; until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black; in chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a means to reclaim memories that we didn't need to feel shame about...memories that all people might study and cherish - and with which we could start to rebuild.

The shouting that Obama describes here is the same shouting and crying out that accompanied the decontextualized excerpts aired on cable and network news programs. Obama heard hope and the blending of stories from Biblical heroes and “ordinary [B]lack people” into a collection of trials and triumphs that he describes as “unique and universal, black and more than black.”

News coverage of Rev. Wright's sermons – widely identified by their most inflammatory statements: “God Damn America” and “Hillary Ain't Never Been Called a Nigger” – suggest that many Americans without experience in a Black church heard something else in the shouting. Many of these Americans heard – perhaps for the first time – a real Black preacher and a real Black congregation in the throws of the frenzy. What they heard and saw did not conform to the solemn, orderly worship of Cosby Show church services or to the bawdy, clownish, decidedly non-threatening caricatures of Black worship in Eddie Murphy movies and prime-time sit-coms. They heard something else, and they interpreted it as anger and hate charged with intense passion. When Obama responded, he commented on both the anger and the major cause of the misunderstanding:

The fact that so many people are surprised to hear that anger in some of Reverend Wright's sermons simply reminds us of the old truism that the most segregated hour in American life occurs on Sunday morning. ... But the anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

By distancing himself from the perceived anger and anti-American sentiments ascribed to Rev. Wright's sermons and the broader Trinity United Church of Christ community, Obama reperfomed Du Bois's move from a century earlier – a 21st century presidential candidate can no more afford to be linked with a misunderstood caricature of an angry black man and a frenzied, irrational community than could a 20th century academic. Those

who have not thus witnessed can still but dimly understand, and misunderstanding carries consequences.

Fear and confusion make sense as first responses to shouting. They make even more sense when first impressions are mediated by nineteenth-century notions of civilization and primitivism or by feeble twenty-first-century commercial journalism. It is reasonable to experience some degree of fear for one's safety when surrounded by "an inconceivable scene of human passion." It is reasonable to experience anxiety on a number of levels when trusted journalists introduce a presidential candidate's church and pastor as a mob of angry Black men and women cheering the message, "God damn America!" It is reasonable for someone reading this dissertation to have been unsettled by the wailing, shouting, and screaming that punctuates the frenzied moments in the conclusion to Sister Mattie Shannon's performance of "Every Year Has A Number." As these few first impressions suggest, shouting as decontextualized human action can overwhelm a first-time witness. I cannot be sure which sense of the word "awful" Du Bois intended use in describing the frenzy, but the ambiguity of the term is particularly appropriate for describing first impressions. It is a primal, powerful gesture that bypasses most nuances of language to express and provoke in a public forum the kinds of fundamental human emotions that many people do not even acknowledge in private spaces.

On any given Sunday at Corinthian, however, most people are not encountering shouting or the rest of the frenzy for the first time. For most people at Corinthian, the frenzy of worship is part of the routine, not a dramatic deviation from it. For them, the varieties of shouting, murmuring, dancing, and moaning are mediated by a lifetime of experience and instruction rather than by a single contrast between Berkshire and rural Tennessee or by sensationalistic skin-deep pseudo-journalism.. To understand the frenzy as it relates to worship at Corinthian at the beginning of the 21st century, we need to look past first impressions and outsiders' interpretations. We must consider not only the obvious power of shouting as individual and collective human action, but also the context, intention and the performer that give those actions meaning.

Engaging the Frenzy at Corinthian

Sister Mary Ridley Black: I don't know how many of you have been in black churches. And I imagine sometimes, if you were there, you would think that somebody was losing their minds or something, because when we serve the Lord we let you know that we know him. . . . It just sometimes touches you. If you know the Lord, it will touch you. And you will know that something's wrong. And we can't help but run, throw up our hands, or just shout. Sometimes some of them will pass out, and I know some of you will think, "What is wrong with those folk?" But you that know — you that know the Lord, you will understand maybe. Cause we don't put on. We know God. When we walk in that door and they start singing those old songs or do a prayer. We'll let you know that we are here. I know myself — I can't help it. When I feel that feeling I have to run. I don't care who laughs or who don't. And you might think I'm nuts, but I can't help it because I know the Lord. And you would be surprised. Just come around sometime and watch it. And we're not crazy, we just love God. And we love you too. Thank you.

Sister Mary Ridley Black offered this explanation of frenzied worship to a predominantly white group of college students and community members who visited a choir rehearsal one Saturday morning. In her brief monologue, Sister Black acknowledges the likelihood that inexperienced observers will be uncomfortable with the frenzy. She also describes and explains the frenzy, creating an image of it that is neither grotesque nor funny. She explains that the frenzy comes from knowing the Lord and being touched by the Lord. She links shouting to loving the Lord, and she links loving the Lord to loving the people who might wonder, "What is wrong with those folk?" This tiny woman sitting in the back of the choir invites outsiders to engage the frenzy with the understanding that it might seem strange at first, but she also expresses her faith that people who know God might eventually understand the frenzy. Outsiders witnessing the frenzy after being prepared for it by Sister Black's description might experience a sense of awe and uncertainty, but her insider's perspective provides crucial information about context and intention in shouting that Du Bois's observations lack.



Figure 54: Sister Mary Ridley Black



Figure 55: Sister Mary Ridley Black (front right) in the midst of the choir's frenzied response to Rev. Harmon Stockdale, Sr.

Other experienced members at Corinthian offer similar introductions to frenzied worship, introductions that invite wonder rather than fear. When I asked Sister Mattie Shannon how she would explain shouting to someone who had never been to Corinthian or witnessed shouting elsewhere, she responded immediately, offering both a generic interpretation and her account of the sensation as she experiences it.

MS: I would just tell them that they happy in the Lord. That the Holy Spirit is guiding them and they happy. They showing what God has given them and they happy over it. That's the way I would look at it. But I don't know whether there's too many people that don't know about the Holy Ghost if they ever had it. It's unexplainable. It's just a feeling that come over you and you have to get it off for just that short time. And you feel fine inside. You just feel wonderful. You just feel like shouting and praising the Lord. And uhhh! It's something, I tell you. It's a feeling that you don't get all the time and you'll know when you get it that it's the Lord that's up on you. I think that it's a wonderful feeling. It's a wonderful feeling. Like just lift a burden up off of you. That's how you feel inside to me.

JS: And afterward?

MS: You alright. You're alright. You feel better and everything. I do. You just feel better and everything. And it sticks with you for a long time after you leave the church, you know. And you can go out and tell peoples, "I had a Holy Ghost time today. I mean God was in this house." I mean that feeling just goes on with you just through on the week. You feel it, and it's a wonderful feeling. It make you feel like you shouldn't have never missed going to church on Sunday morning. ... It was just something that happened that it just sticks with you and it go with you through all out the week. You just want to say hello to your neighbors and speak to different peoples and smile and the world'll smile with you and just not have a frown on your face no time and just smile inside. I'm telling you.



Figure 56: Sister Mattie Shannon with her pastor

Sister Shannon and Sister Black make strong connections with Du Bois's descriptions. Du Bois's claim that "All this is...as old as religion," resonates with Sister Black's suspicion that "you that know the Lord will understand, maybe." His claim that "those who have not witnessed...can but dimly realize the religious feeling," resonates with Sister Shannon's statement, "It's unexplainable." Du Bois's outsider perspective and these women's insider perspectives reveal similar characteristics about the frenzy, but Sister Black and Sister Shannon present it as a routine (though still extraordinary) feature of their daily lives. Du Bois exoticizes the frenzy because it is not an integrated part of his lived experience; Sister Shannon and Sister Black humanize and normalize it by inhabiting it. They create an expectation of accessibility whereas Du Bois's descriptions inscribe a chasm between emotional and intellectual engagement with religion.

The implication of fundamental difference that I read in Du Bois's writing clashes with the shared exalted experience into which Sister Black and Sister Shannon invite us. Extrapolating from these examples, it might seem that outsiders and insiders experience the frenzy in fundamentally different ways. If this was the case – if insiders never feared the frenzy and outsiders never understood it – then there would be little reason to continue with this chapter. If, on the other hand, Sister Black is right, then some portion of the veil might be more permeable in the 21st century than Du Bois's 20th-century writings suggest. My experiences at Corinthian lead me to share Sister Black and Sister Shannon's more hopeful position. Sister Black could have been telling my story (or Du Bois's story) when she imagined a first-time visitor to Corinthian wondering if someone was "losing their minds or something." Words cannot express the chaotic potential and the undeniable power of a congregation that is in the middle of "a Holy Ghost time." However, words *can* put that experience into a context that promotes understanding.

Sister Black's suggestion to "just come around sometime and watch it" is a good one, but I suggest also staying for dinner after the service. Conversations and meals shared, relationships of friendship and mutual concern, and years of unexceptional encounters with people change them from "the gaunt-cheeked brown woman" that Du Bois describes into real people with real personalities. "Those who have not thus witnessed the frenzy," as Du Bois wrote, "can but dimly realize the religious feeling [it expresses]," but outsiders who get to know the people involved in the frenzy have a chance of understanding the significance of shouting and dancing. My participation in worship and community life at Corinthian has

helped me to develop an appreciation for shouting and the other forms of the frenzy. I do not shout, but I participate as a member of the congregation, clapping, laughing, and responding vocally to songs, prayers, and sermons. I feel happy for the people who do shout. I enjoy the love and support of the congregation – the same basic support that the congregation extends to their pastor, their musicians, their children, and their fellow members. I remain a non-native – an external presence according to Banks’s typology of researchers – but I have become more than a visitor. In the language of ethnography, I am a participant-observer, not just an observer. In the language of Corinthian, I “have my way.” When the frenzy builds, I perform my supporting role comfortably, and I enjoy some of the same uplifting feelings that Sister Shannon attributes to having “a Holy Ghost time.”

More importantly, the sense of incomprehension and discomfort that I felt when I first encountered shouting – the same emotion that I read into Du Bois’s descriptions of the frenzy and the national response to Rev. Wright – is not restricted to outsiders, academics, and white members of the American electorate. Vanessa Croney is as much an insider as anyone at Corinthian. She is the daughter of two of Corinthian’s prominent leaders. Her husband is one of Corinthian’s associate ministers. She is a leader and regular soloist in the choir, one of its directors, and the leader of the praise team. She and Rev. Croney are raising their children in the church. She is also one of the few people at Corinthian who not only shouts but occasionally dances.



Figure 57: Sister Vanessa Croney



Figure 58: Eboni Croney with her mother



Figure 59: Sister Vanessa Croney directing the choir

When I asked her to help me understand shouting, Vanessa began her explanation with this revelation:

VC: When I was little – anybody in this church can tell you this – you won't believe it, but anybody can tell you – when I was a small child, I could not stand anybody shouting.

JS: Really?!

VC: I was like this {**squeezes eyes tightly closed and puts hands over ears**}. I had my hands on my ears. It scared me to death. You ask anybody that has some age on them and they will tell you, "That girl could not." I was a nervous wreck. I would want to run. I would cry. I couldn't

stand it. I can't explain to you why I was like that, but it just made me – it just upset me. I was like, "Oh my God, why are these people shouting? What is wrong with them? Why are they crying and jumping?" And as time went on I started to understand and it didn't bother me as much.

Vanessa's report of being confused and afraid as a young witness to others' shouting resonated with Du Bois's descriptions and my first experiences witnessing shouting at Corinthian and other churches as an adult. They also correspond remarkably well to the kinds of comments and questions that my family members made when they witnessed shouting during visits to Corinthian and the news media's analysis of Rev. Wright's sermonic fragments.

The shouting, dancing, adult Vanessa no longer understands reflexively why shouting, crying, and jumping should have upset her. She says, "I can't explain to you why I was like that, but it just made me – it just upset me." Vanessa's inability to explain why a child would be upset by shouting communicates something important about the thinking-about-religion that happens at Corinthian. This kind of nostalgic wonder depends on an understanding of shouting that has fully integrated its physical and vocal gestures with its positive, affirming functions as a part of Corinthian's religious culture. The alarming number of potential meanings and the number of potentially alarming specific meanings that presumably led the younger Vanessa to hold her ears and close her eyes have collapsed into a manageable range of encouraging meanings.



Figures 60-61: Vanessa Crony dancing in the spirit



Figure 62: Vanessa Croney dancing and being fanned by an usher



Figures 63-64: Sister Vanessa Cronney shouting

Insiders to the frenzy understand its performed manifestations as components of a positive religious experience. Sister Black connects the experience with knowing the Lord. Sister Mattie Shannon describes it as being “happy in the Lord.” Some, like Sister Croney remember learning to make that association over time, unlearning their initial anxiety as a gradual process. Others, as Sister Mattie Shannon explains, accept the prevailing positive explanations of shouting from an early age.

MS: I never really thought about it. I wasn't nervous or nothing. I just felt — you know Mama always told us that the Holy Spirit was on 'em, and that's what I took it to be going on when I see her shouting going on or anybody else in the church that be shouting. The Holy Spirit was up on them and that was their way of showing the Holy Spirit. They was full of the Holy Ghost, cause they would just dance and shake and shout and go on. And that God was up on them and that he was in them. And they just really was high on the Holy Ghost, and that's how they showed that Christ was a part of them. And it didn't bother me, you know. I probably had tears in my eyes from looking at them. Cause I knew something tremendous was going on, you know. That they was just — they was happy. And being happy, it wouldn't made me nervous. They just being happy and they showing that. That's the way I looked at it. But everybody don't look at the same thing different. When you got the Holy Ghost, you gotta show some signs. You got to act it out. And it don't last long, but it's there. You just have to show it.

Clearly different people encounter shouting and other manifestations of the frenzy in different ways. Likewise a congregation or an individual member might express the frenzy through a variety of gestures and favor certain ways of thinking about the frenzy and describing it over others.

At Corinthian, the peaks of frenzy — shouting and dancing — are understood as responses that require a congregant to be open to the experience and in tune with the reality of God working in her life.

VC: And when it's done, you might not see this in church because somebody's carried me on out, but I'm in full reverence. I'm just like, “Oh God.” I mean, like, basically bowing down, just like if Jesus was there I'd be kissing his feet, you know. It's just a — songs do that to me. Sermons do that to me. It's just the word of God that stirs up in your soul that relates to something that you've dealt with or that you're dealing with. And it's almost like an answer comes and you're like, “That's it!” you know. And, you know, and that's I think that's where the praise and the shouting and the dancing comes in.

Vanessa's account of accepting shouting offers an important opportunity to understand how expressive, ecstatic worship practices become normalized. Notice how Vanessa answers her childhood question, “Why are these people shouting?”

VC: ...now for me when there's a — when there's a word in the song — and when I say a word in the song I mean something biblical, you know, something that I know is from God and it doesn't

even have to be biblical but if it's something that – because of my connection with God and I feel like I do hear from God and I feel like I do – I'm able to recognize when God speaks to my heart. There are some songs that just speak to my heart and when you hear that for other people too, it just takes them to another place and it goes from being emotional from a song, from being just emotionally – because sometimes songs can make you emotional. It goes from just being emotional to a full – just – as for me it just goes into a flat out just reverence.

Shouting as Vanessa describes it is “a flat out...reverence,” a transcendent experience beyond emotion. It is, just as importantly, a response to a worshiper's experience of God acting in her life. From such a perspective, Vanessa's adult confusion over why shouting scared her as a child makes a great deal of sense. So one answer to Vanessa's question, “What's wrong with them?” is, “Nothing.” Nothing is wrong with shouting. At Corinthian, shouting is more often an indication that several things are right – God is being good, God's people are noticing, and they are in a space and a state of mind that allows them to shout about it.

The frenzy as it occurs at Corinthian is a complex, heterogeneous performance of faith, a sophisticated way of being active and open to feeling and responding to God's agency in one's life. Shouting makes sense to people who understand the conventions of worship at Corinthian just as it did to the people who understood the conventions of worship at the Southern revival that Du Bois interprets for his readers. Comfort or discomfort result from understanding or misunderstanding. The swaying, quivering preacher whose singular eloquence preceded the woman's sudden leaping was certainly less surprised by the leap than Du Bois was. The adult Vanessa no longer squeezes her eyes shut when the shouting starts; Sister Mattie never did. They understand that shouting is not about “what's wrong,” but is, instead, about what has been made right. It is an integral feature of a performed faith that invites believers first to understand and then to invite and experience God's overwhelming power in a way that demands action and affirms believers' value as people in whose individual and communal lives God takes an active interest.

Seeking Religion – Finding the Frenzy

Du Bois's claim that “many generations firmly believed that without [the frenzy] there could be no true communion with the Invisible” finds continuing support in stories told by the older members at Corinthian. Learning to embrace the frenzy – or, to paraphrase Sister Shannon, getting the Holy Ghost and showing it – was a prerequisite for full membership in

the west-Tennessee churches where many of Corinthian's senior members grew up in the middle of the 20th century. Most members of Pastor Fuzz's generation and earlier generations report sitting on the mourners' bench during revivals until they shouted or showed some other sign of their conversion and accepted Christ. Many of the older members at Corinthian who now stand as principle examples for me of Du Bois's "silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan" include performances of faith that are more consistent with his "mad abandon of physical fervor" as part of their conversion narratives.

Typically those first experiences of "true communion with the Invisible" occurred during revivals when the front pew – the space immediately in front of the preacher, the congregation, and the choir – became the mourners' bench.

Pastor Enoch Fuzz: Usually when you were between 8 and 12 years old, your family designated you to go on the mourners' bench to seek religion. Either the mom, the dad, or the grandparents – someone in the family - would make sure you got religion.

...

EF: The week I was on the mourners' bench at 9 years old, I had to go stay with my dad's aunt who would take me to the church at 10:00 in the morning and 7:00 at night for that week to seek religion. You couldn't play with your friends. When you were on the mourner's bench, you had to be all praying and all... It's really strange that things have changed so nowadays. They did this for five nights.

Sister Mattie Shannon offers a more detailed account of her time seeking religion:

MS: I was ten years old. I sat on the mourner's bench for a whole week. I almost busted wide open two or three nights. And then my brother, he joined. Me and my other sister – the one that passed – we joined the same night that my oldest brother joined. It was – I didn't know what to do. I seen something that I hadn't seen before and I felt something that I hadn't felt before and I knew that it was the lord and I knew that he wanted me to be on his side. And in order to do that, I realized that I had to give him my soul. My granddaddy prayed so hard last night. Oh lord. That man prayed so hard I thought the rooftop was gonna come down. You talk about service – mmmm! We had service that night. It was awesome! And I couldn't sit still. I just couldn't. I just got up and just walked from one end of the church to the other. I didn't shout. I just walked. I just walked from one end of the church to the other. And I said, "Lord have mercy. What is it? What is it?" He said, "Give me your heart." From then on, honey, I've been running ever since. Been running. I've been running, honey. Running for Jesus. I ain't tired yet. I ain't tired yet. Those were the days. Mmmm mmmm mmmm.

Sister Shannon and Pastor Fuzz both remember the mourners' bench as a space and an experience in which their families helped them to find religion.



Figure 65: Pastor Fuzz talking with a young man on the mourner's bench during a revival

Pastor Fuzz remembers the aunt who brought him to the revival twice a day for a week. Sister Shannon remembers her grandfather, a deacon at her childhood church, praying “so hard [she] thought the rooftop was gonna come down.” She remembers joining the church on the same night as her older brother and her late sister.

Family expectations play an important role in motivating and guiding children's search for religion. Neither Pastor Fuzz nor Sister Shannon report any strong individual motivation for seeking religion. Sister Shannon reports not really knowing what to do until she “felt something that [she] hadn't felt before.” Pastor Fuzz specifically credits his father's aunt with putting him on the mourners' bench and reports not being able to play with his friends because he “had to be praying and all.” Reading Pastor Fuzz's description of his time on the mourners' bench, a skeptic might wonder whether a desire to get off the mourners' bench might lead children to feign shouting in order to satisfy parental expectations or to get back to playing with friends. It seems safe to assume that some young people would try to cut the “praying and all” short by pretending to get religion.

Not surprisingly, the adults that Pastor Fuzz credits with making sure that children got religion seem to have been on guard against the possibility of young people pretending to get the Holy Spirit. Sister Shannon specifically describes the “old folks” as the people responsible not only for literally praying and singing the mourners into the frenzy but also for gauging the sincerity of their conversion experience.

MS: You had to stay there until you got the Holy Ghost. You had to get the Holy Ghost, honey, before the old folks would let you up. You had to really know that you know that you know. When I was on the mourners' bench — I told you I had to stay there five days. Are you sure?

Are you sure? Are you sure that you got the Holy Spirit? We had to explain how we knew that we had the Holy Ghost and that we were sincerely ready to take the pastor's hand and be baptized. Honey, you had to stay there. They prayed so hard over you and sang so hard over you - you couldn't set still. You had to come up — shouting and praising the lord and just being in the spirit. Didn't nobody talk us into getting up or nothing. We had to stay there until the Holy Spirit came. We had to stay there. Not like they do now.

In her last sentence, “Not like they do now,” Sister Shannon performs the concerned skepticism that she credits to the elders of her childhood. Her statement recalls Du Bois's claim that the frenzy's grip on current generations is somehow diminished, adding the possibility of a generational gap to the list of reasons why Du Bois would ascribe a stronger attachment to the frenzy to older generations. It may well be the case that the differences between older individuals and younger individuals that Du Bois interpreted as a decline in the power of the frenzy's hold on communities were caused, at least in part, by relatively consistent patterns of religious development. Older members seem more devoted to the mourners bench, shouting, the old songs, and other “old landmarks” of religion because they have lived with them longer, they have learned to embrace them, and they are charged with teaching them to younger members, just as they learned them from the older members who preceded them.

Both Sister Shannon and Pastor Fuzz describe their experiences on the mourners' bench nostalgically, suggesting that things are different today. But even if “those were the days” and things are strangely different at present, Sister Crony's account of receiving the gift of dancing describes a process of seeking religion that resonates with their accounts.

VC: I prayed to God. When I went to the Pentacostal Church I said, “Lord I want to praise you just like that. I want to dance for you.” And I read it in the word when it talks about David and the dance, you know. And I was like, “Look, there's nothing wrong with it. This is in the Bible.” I said, “I want to praise you like that.” Not to stand out. But I don't know. There was just something about it and I said, “I want to do that. I want to dance for you.” And one day he just gave it to me. And I just struck out and I've been doing it ever since. But then there comes to a period of - It stirs up in my soul and I just feel it and it's like the Lord's spirit just quickens me and I'm gone before I know I'm dancing I'm dancing.

Vanessa describes this stage in her transition from a child afraid of shouting into one of Corinthian's most frequent shouters and only regular dancer as a process of learning and discovery. In contrast to childhood experiences on the mourners' bench, this example of seeking religion involves an adult believer pursuing a specific manifestation of the frenzy of

her own volition. Although Vanessa's desire to dance seems to have played an important role in the eventual outcome of this story, it is not as simple as choosing to dance.

Vanessa's desire to dance led her to explore the scriptural basis for holy dancing. It led her to pray to God about her desire to dance for God. Then one day, as she explains it "[God] just gave it to [her]." Vanessa describes the experience as being stirred up and quickened by the Lord's spirit, a description that resonates with Mattie's feeling of nearly busting. Vanessa could be quoting Mattie when she talks about striking out and dancing "ever since." Vanessa's quest to dance was self-motivated and individual in contrast to the mourners' bench experiences that members of her parents' generations describe, but the transformation is equally profound. There is a time before dancing for Jesus or giving your heart to the Lord, and then there is "ever since."

Vanessa describes dancing as a gift from God, but the way she describes dancing and shouting suggests that she also experiences it as a surrender of herself to God. She does not choose to dance; she chooses to tell God, "I want to dance for you." After she receives the gift of dancing, it becomes something that the Lord does. The Lord's spirit "quickens" her and Vanessa is dancing before she knows she is dancing. After learning to be open to dancing, Vanessa no longer talks about choosing to dance. Instead, she describes dancing and shouting as things that she sometimes has to choose to resist or delay in order to honor her commitments as a director or a soloist.

VC: When there are certain songs being sung – before – I can tell you in choir rehearsal. I'll say, when they say, "Vanessa are you gonna direct this song?" I'll go, "If I can get through it." You know, cause I already know the words to the song, so I – I'm really like, "Oh wow. Oh my God." Sometimes I have to concentrate on the – not the words but what's going on around me – to keep myself – to get myself through the song. Because the song is ministering to me and it's just tapping on my heart and I have to a little bit be "Okay okay okay. Get together" to get the choir through the rest of the song.

JS: And I've noticed – from what I can tell – you don't start shouting or dancing when you're singing lead or when you're directing. You might – it looks like you might right after.

VC: I've been holding it. I've been holding like, "Thank you! Now I can go!" Yeah. Yeah, I can feel it coming. Like I said, I get a quickening in my spirit where something just shakes me like, "Whoa! I don't know how much more of this I can take." I try to end it so I can go on. Yeah.

Vanessa's description of shouting and dancing in context of her multiple roles reveals a complicated performance in which invisible actions of delay and surrender mediate the visible action of dance in response to intentions that are not wholly her own.

There is also a fine but significant difference between seeking to shout and seeking the kind of encounter with the divine that leads to shouting. Du Bois focuses on the responses, the “visible manifestation” of what he describes as the Spirit “seizing the devotee.” Deacon Benjamin Flagg, Corinthian’s Chairman of Deacons and one of the congregation’s most senior and respected members, commented one Sunday, “I advise you not to try shouting unless you’re moved by the Holy Spirit.” Deacon Flagg’s advice and the skeptical elders in Sister Shannon’s conversion narrative certainly acknowledge the possibility of self-motivated, pseudo-shouting that might come from seeking to shout, but they just as clearly rule it out as a general explanation for most shouting. People like Mattie and Vanessa who shout and people like Deacon Flagg who interpret Corinthian’s religious expectations with authority articulate an ethic of surrender and selflessness around the frenzy that point to shouting and dancing as evidence and reminders of God’s grace and mercy and not of the virtue of the shouter. The gestures of the frenzy are responses to God’s call, and insiders at Corinthian know to focus on the invisible, subjective calls from God that precede and give context to the shouting and dancing. Committed Christians like Sister Shannon and Sister Croney for whom shouting or dancing is a part of a rich and fulfilling faith life are going to seek out authentic frenzy experiences, but shouting or dancing insincerely would be pointless, and as Deacon Flagg cautions, unadvisable.

In her account, Sister Mattie Shannon recalls a subjective experience of “nearly bust[ing] wide open” as well as a conversation with her Lord that left her unable to sit still. Walking the church was the visible manifestation of the frenzy that proved the experience to others, but her narrative focuses on the prayer, “having service,” talking with God, and “running ever since.” Her earlier explanation of shouting omits any description of the physical or vocal gestures involved, emphasizing instead the “wonderful feeling” involved. She describes being “happy in the Lord,” being guided by the Holy Spirit, and carrying that feeling with her through the week. Like Pastor Fuzz, she contrasts her experience on the mourners’ bench with modern practices. Pastor Fuzz expressed his as a matter of professional curiosity, calling the change strange. The murmur and moan of the frenzy color Sister Mattie’s nostalgic recollections of the mourners bench directly. She paraphrases a song about “running for Jesus” and not being “tired yet”

The culture of religious expectations in which a person grows up, and the culture in which that person finds herself on a given Sunday shape her understanding of the limits and possibilities for faithful performance.

EF: A part of shouting... they grow up in it. That's another part of where it comes from and how people have the expression of their religion or how they express their religious experiences. It's a part of how they grew up. If you grew up in an organization that speaks in tongues, you're gonna be speaking in tongues, more likely. If you didn't grow up in an organization that's speaking in tongues, ninety-nine and a half percent you're not gonna be one of those who speaks in tongues.

As a congregation, Corinthian does not tend to speak in tongues. They have other clear expectations for people's conduct during worship, expectations that include not only the types of actions that worshipers might take but also the contexts in which those actions would be appropriate. As the song says (see Ch. 3 "So Glad I'm Here"), Corinthian expects people to shout "if the spirit says so," but it does not specify exactly what form that shouting ought to take or what else the spirit might tell someone to do. Vanessa did not start dancing until she spent time in a community that recognized dancing as a certain way of participating in worship. Visitors to Corinthian bring their own expectations along with them, making them some of the more surprising shouters and dancers. Community expectations also play a major role in shouting, as they arguably do in other aspects of performed religion. This does not imply that shouting or dancing or any other expression of the frenzy is any less spontaneous than other performances that are likewise governed by cultural expectations.



Figure 66 (left): An usher tends to a woman shouting in the aisle



Figure 67 (right): Hands raised in support of the pastor's message



Figure 68: The congregation full of the Spirit during a revival

Timothy Nelson, a sociologist describing an AME congregation in Charleston, South Carolina, makes just such a point about the “amens” that punctuate sermons and serve, in some capacity, as a less dramatic manifestation of the frenzy:

The norms pertaining to “emotional” response are not imposed in the same way as those which pertain to “nonemotional” activities like singing hymns or responsive liturgical readings. ...expectations of response are diffused throughout the entire congregation and are not assigned to particular individuals. For example, the preacher expects that *somebody*, or a handful of people perhaps, will say “amen” when he or she makes a strong point, yet no person or group of persons is *designated* to respond in this way. According to this structure, the involvement of each congregant is constantly ambiguous in that at each point one may choose to respond or to not respond. There is no set script to follow, although each congregant knows the general story line. (1996: 388-89; emphasis in original)

Although the issue of choice to shout or not shout is, as Deacon Flagg’s admonition suggests, more complicated than this brief excerpt might suggest, the ambiguous nature of collective and individual responsibilities for faithful performance translates well from Nelson’s AME congregation to Corinthian. At Corinthian, people learn how to participate in worship in ways that express their individuality while conforming to the expectations of the community. Seeking religion at Corinthian is ultimately about finding oneself in relation to God and the rest of the congregation.

Shouting Material: Problems & Prayer, Salvation & Celebration

The difference between the routine supportive dialogue of a congregation engaging a preacher and shouting is the difference between a spring shower and a tornado. Under certain circumstances, the frenzy manifests not only as a collectively improvised, relatively diffuse performance of faithful worship, but also as an exponentially more intense event focused in one or more individual members of the congregation. Elsewhere in this chapter, I move freely between the various phenomena of the frenzy. Sometimes I focus on the diffuse “Amens” that routinely punctuate dialogues of prayer, song, and preaching. At other times I address the shouting and dancing that occupy the more individually-focused end of the spectrum of frenzy performance. Both extremes illustrate the frenzy, but shouting is a category of the frenzy that warrants special attention.

Du Bois describes the gestures of shouting and interprets them as a sort of madness in which a devotee driven to express a “supernatural joy.” The gestures are undoubtedly

dramatic, but they are only the most obvious elements of a broader performance of faithful surrender of the self to God. Du Bois's descriptions of the frenzied shouting he witnessed during a nineteenth-century revival are as effective as anything I might craft to describe the physical and vocal gestures of shouting at Corinthian. Instead of offering another description of the bodily performance of surrender to the frenzy, I choose to focus on the faithful habits of mind that undergird a culture of shouting at Corinthian. Those habits of mind intersect with socio-economic disparity and theologies of divine intervention by a merciful God to create the dramatic eruptions of ecstatic frenzy known as shouting.

There is no scheduled time set apart during a service for shouting. Unlike the preacher's sermon or the various musical selections, the most dramatic examples of the frenzy are not listed in the order of worship for a Sunday service. They occur as a part of a diffuse, chaotic system in which particular conditions call forth particular responses from particular people. Even though a typical shouting event features one or a few individual worshipers, the elements of intent and context make shouting more than an individual performance. Deacon Flagg's admonition against shouting "unless you're moved by the Holy Spirit," and Deacon Woodruff's musical introduction to worship that mandates shouting "if the Spirit says so" (see Ch. 3) illustrate an ethic of shouting that takes much of the agency out of individual believers' hands. Corinthian's congregation understand shouting to be something that is initiated in some meaningful way by the Spirit. Worshipers at Corinthian use the term, "shouting material," to denote the events and experiences through which the Spirit "says so" and moves people to shout.

When Pastor Fuzz explained shouting to me, he offered the following dense explanation that contextualizes shouting as a response to shouting material:

EF: People who have problems shout when they hear the message that, "Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime but I know Jesus will fix it after a while." That's shouting material for them. The folk who have problems they can't see their way out. The people who had problems and they couldn't see their way out and it was something very overwhelming and they'd been given this prediction of doom and they prayed and that was what they did and it worked out for them and they are reminded of that in the sermon of that witness of that testimony, that's shouting material for them. For the lady whose son was given a fifty-fifty and she spent her night on her knees and that son got well, every now and then that's gonna have that person running down the aisles.
(Interview 2008 January 19)

Pastor Fuzz describes shouting material as a system of relationships between people and their problems and their God, mediated by prayer, preaching, music, and

memory, and then manifest by shouting or dancing or “running down the aisles.” Shouting material is in the experience of “trouble in my way” when that experience is accompanied by the message that “Jesus will fix it.” It is in the experience of divine interventions that solve problems, and it is in the musicked and religioned reminders that punctuate mundane moments with remembered miracles. It is a term used at Corinthian and elsewhere to designate those things that have been made right by God – blessings and mercies that merit shouting – but it is also a process of understanding and managing problems. It involves calling out to God for solutions and then attempting an appropriate response when God “makes a way out of no way.” As a category, shouting material includes everything from dramatic positive resolutions to medical and legal crises – the kinds of occurrences that Corinthian recalls when referring to Jesus as “a doctor in the sickroom” or “a lawyer in the courtroom” – to the less spectacular but no less appreciated resolutions of chronic needs that accompany poverty.

Problems & Prayer

Problems offer a reasonable point of entry for an ethnographic exploration of shouting material. In his description of shouting, Pastor Fuzz begins with people and their problems, explaining to me that, “People who have problems shout...” In doing so, he reframes Vanessa’s Croney’s childhood question, “What is wrong with them?” to point not toward the shouting itself but toward the concrete experiences of human frailty and desperate need that give people reasons to shout. Pastor Fuzz describes the distinction between shouters and non-shouters as a function of their different relationships to problems.

EF: For those churches where there’s not much shouting. These are the ones I’m talking about. A First Baptist is like that - a First Baptist. The average “First Baptist” is the sophisticated, you know, silk stocking image it has. Those are people who are educated, maybe. They’re from middle class and up. They don’t need Jesus to solve their problems. They’ve figured out that everything is gonna be alright for right now. [They might think] “I don’t have anything that’s not gonna be alright. My light bill is paid. I don’t have a car that’s about to be repossessed. I don’t have a kid that’s in jail that I don’t know how to get him out of jail. I don’t have, you know, a sickness or a doctor that I can’t pay. So I don’t really need Jesus to come and fix things. What’s wrong with these other people out here? They need to be like me.” So it’s just a go through the motions and I love the Lord and it’s okay. They don’t have problems.

Beginning with congregations that do not generally shout – communities like the Berkshire congregation that Du Bois claims or the Suffolk ones he mentions – Pastor Fuzz sets up a dichotomy not grounded in theology, geography, or denominational polity, but instead one based on contrasting experiences of needs and problems.

The people at the so-called silk-stocking churches have a degree of control over their lives that many people at Corinthian and other shouting churches simply do not have. Individuals in both groups have needs, but wealthier, individuals with more extensive formal education in more affluent congregations have more resources with which to address their needs. Their education provides them with the skills, confidence, and institutional know-how to deal with private and public bureaucracies and to advocate for their rights and toward their interests. Their middle-class incomes put food on their tables and provide for their other basic needs, preventing those needs from metastasizing into what Pastor Fuzz refers to as “problems.” It may be hyperbole to suggest that *nothing* is wrong for these people, but they certainly experience fewer crises and chronic unmet needs than the shouting congregations and individuals against whom Pastor Fuzz contrasts them.

As Pastor Fuzz explains, circumstances are different for many people in shouting congregations. Even if nothing is wrong *with* the people who shout, there is often a great deal that is wrong or has been wrong *for* people who shout. Needs combine with a lack of material resources and social capital to create problems that these individuals cannot solve. Pastor Fuzz describes problems – needs that people cannot meet for themselves or crises from which “they can’t see their way out” – as a feature of daily life for some members at Corinthian. The woman Pastor Fuzz describes whose son’s doctors gave him “a fifty-fifty” has a problem regardless of the cost or quality of the medical care that preceded the prognosis, but a mother with few resources and limited access to health care and even nutritious food is more likely to experience this scenario than a mother with greater resources.

In describing the people for whom the most basic human needs – food, clothing, and shelter – routinely constitute problems, Pastor Fuzz highlights the second feature of shouting material: prayer. Earlier in the same interview, Pastor Fuzz elaborated on this prayerful dependence on God as a daily occurrence for many people with limited educations and fewer financial and social resources:

EF: And the less educated because they have fewer options and ways that they can come up with to solve their particular problem. So, they gotta depend on God. The only person they know is the Lord. They're driving down the street, walking down the road, "Lord help me. Have mercy. I just need you. Come on." That's what they know.

These less-educated, financially impoverished people spend more time at the ends of their ropes relying on God because their ropes are shorter and their safety nets are less reliable in comparison to their silk-stocking counterparts. It would take an extraordinary event – a freak accident, an incurable disease, or perhaps an act of God – to drop a silk-stocking church's child's chances of surviving the night to 50%. Children living without reliable access to healthy food, adequate shelter, and quality medical care and those living in inherently dangerous environments – high crime neighborhoods or overcrowded prisons – live more precarious lives significantly closer to that tipping point. The same pattern of unequal access to health care manifests in other areas of life, generally breaking along lines of race and poverty. Accordingly, people at Corinthian can point to specific examples in their lives or lives of friends and family in which a problem led to prayer for God to be not only a doctor in a sick room, but also "a lawyer in a courtroom," "bread in a starving land," and a variety of other need-meeters in desperate situations. A favorite verse of scripture, particularly among older members who have lived through problems, describes looking to the hills for help that comes "from the Lord."

Although some people acknowledge God having acted to solve their problems without them asking, the theology of sermons, songs, prayers, and conversations prescribes prayer – turning problems over to Jesus, laying one's burdens down, looking to the hills, and otherwise trusting in God to "make a way somehow." The mother that Pastor Fuzz describes as a shouter ends up turning to God in prayer as a response to her son's medical problem. In the sermon "Where is Your Faith?" (Ch. II), Pastor Fuzz lifts up Aunt Caroline as a model Christian because she also responded to her desperate need by turning to God in prayer:

EF: Well, Aunt Caroline didn't do like a lot of us
She did not make God her **last** resort
But she **made** the **Lord** her first resort
And she **fe-ell _ down** on her knees
And she went down on her knees and she said
Now Lord
Now Lord
Lord well you know I never was able to get an education

But Lord I wanted my little girl to have a better way
Now Lord is what she prayed
Yes I need you to come on and _ make a way _ out of no way
(“Where is Your Faith” 3 June 2007)

Prayer’s efficacy as a problem-solving strategy relies on the faith expressed in Pastor Fuzz’s lyrics and in the apocryphal Aunt Caroline’s prayer that “Jesus will fix it” and that God can and will “make a way out of no way.” The act of praying and the waiting that follows that act depend on a kind of fatalistic optimism, one that acknowledges that the problem at hand is too big for the believer but not too big for God. Vanessa Cronney explained the foundation of that faith to me by recounting a conversation with her parents after one of her own experiences of shouting material.

VC: You know, it’s like, my momma and my dad was like, “Your faith is unbelievable.” I said, you know what, I tell people faith doesn’t come by choice. It just doesn’t. I believe faith comes when you don’t have another choice. When you don’t have any other choice. I said, “I didn’t get faith because, ‘Oh I just really want to believe in god.’” It was - You don’t have any other options. This is what you got. You got: your life is doomed or trust God and let him do it. And it was like, well yeah, it was a choice, but it was still like, I don’t have anything else.

Pastor Fuzz began his explanation of shouting with people who experience problems and respond with prayer. Vanessa’s explanation of the faith that had her shouting and running around the church one Sunday likewise turns attention back toward the problems that only God can solve.

Shouting happens after God “makes a way out of no way,” but the “no way” of doom and desperate need is a part of shouting material too. People who shout know what is wrong with them. They have experienced their own frailty and they have exhausted their resources. Unlike the people at the silk stocking churches, they have a light bill that has not been paid, a car that might be repossessed, a kid that is in jail, a sickness with no money for a doctor, and they have figured out that something is going to go very wrong unless Jesus comes and fixes things. They recognize the burdens that they cannot bear, and they lay them down in prayer. Shouting does not appear in the order of worship, but prayer does. In addition to several public prayers that occur as part of the deacons’ devotional time or as integrated parts of sermons, songs, and other events, most services feature an altar prayer. During the altar prayer, the choir descends from the choir loft and gathers with a large fraction of the general congregation around the altar. Listen to the multiple references to

problems and prayer in the invitation, song and prayer in this recording of an altar prayer from March of 2008.

Recorded Example 10 – “Pray For Me” & Altar Prayer
Rev. Dr. Raymond Richardson (9 March 2008)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(1)]

RR: It's time for altar prayer
If you're in need of prayer
Meet us down at the altar
You pray for me and I'll pray for you.

Pray for me
Pray for me
Oh oh my brother
Pray for me [oh yes oh yes]
[And] when you bow
Down at the altar
Please don't forget
To pray for me
I was lost I was lost
Ohhh I was lost Could not find my way
Could not find my way Oh I thank you
brother
I thank you brother
For praying for me

And since I met Jesus ohhh
Since I met Jesus Now I can say
Now I can say Oh I thank you brother
I thank you brother I'm on
I'm on My way
My way

Pray for me
Pray for me
Ohhh, oh my brother
Pray for me
And when you bow
Down at the altar
Please don't forget
To pray for me

RR: Lord you've been my dwelling place
Through all generations
Before the mountains were formed
Before the earth was brought forth
From everlasting to everlasting
Thou art God
Lord we come today like blind beggars
Who sat on the side of the road
Couldn't see Jesus
But had evidence _ that he was in the vicinity
Lord we can't _ see you today
But we have evidence _ that you are in the vicinity
There's air stirring in the room
That's evidence that you're in the vicinity
You woke us up this morning and started us on our way

That's evidence _ that you are in the vicinity
 We have seen _ the sick healed when there was no hope for healing
 We have evidence that you're in the vicinity
 We have seen _ hard times _ that turned to good times
 We have seen _ hope-less-ness turn to hope
 That's evidence that you're in the vicinity
 The Holy Spirit is in this place today
 That's evidence that you're in the vicinity
 Lord we come _ lifting up our sick and our shut in
 Lifting up _ those with bowed down heads and troubled minds
 We come lifting up _ those who are worried and don't know where their next meal is coming
 from
 We come lifting up _ those who don't _ have peace of mind
 Those who are troubled in their hearts and their souls
 We come lifting them up because nobody but Jesus
 We have evidence that you are in the vicinity because
 You have turned _ a wilderness into hope
 We were in bondage _ with no way to get out
 No weapons
 No army
 And you delivered us
 Brought us to a place _ of wealth
 We thank you Lord _ that things are not what they used to be
 They may not be what they ought to be
 But you blessed us beyond _ measure
 Thank you lord
 You've been so good and you've been so kind
 You've blessed us when we did not deserve to be blessed
 Thank you lord.
 These and other blessings we ask in the name of Jesus Christ..
Amen.

The invitation and song which are always the same highlight the constant experience of problems and prayer. People are in need of prayer. They profess to being lost in the past or in the present, unable to find their way. They appeal for themselves and for each other to God. They thank each other for prayer and for the blessings that God sends through Jesus in response to those prayers. Then they return – every single time – to the first verse that asks again for prayer. Then in his stylized, improvised prayer, Dr. Richardson narrates the history of problems and prayer from the beginnings of the Earth through to the desperate needs of the moment. He thanks God for answered prayers, reminding the congregation

that they provide evidence that God is in the vicinity. He acknowledges that there are still problems that we cannot solve and he asks for continued blessings “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Salvation & Celebration

The encounter with a problem and the prayerful surrender of that problem to God lays the foundation for shouting material when “God mak[es] a way out of no way.” The mother’s son survives the night, or a solution to some other problem comes in response to prayer. Corinthian has many ways of explaining how God does not always answer prayers in the way that believers want God to answer them or when they want them to be answered, but people shout because they find that God *has* answered their prayers. Pastor Fuzz is clear on this point:

EF: And so when the problem is solved, because God does hear those kinds of things. He does step in and take care of babies with food. He does solve it. And people who will give him credit, he does solve the problem for him and they do give him credit. And they go out and do something for him, some of them. They’ll go out and do some great work.

When the problem resolves, the event becomes evidence of God’s goodness. Pastor Fuzz describes people responding to God’s interventions in their lives by “giv[ing] him credit,” “do[ing] some great work,” or “running down the aisles,” responding to blessings with praise, service, and sometimes shouting. These gestures acknowledge and respond to God’s intervention without claiming to balance the books. As a general principle, exchanges between the creator and God’s creations are unequal, but shouting material highlights this imbalance.

The music of Corinthian returns repeatedly to address the challenge of repaying an unserviceable debt to God. One powerful song grounds a 8-minute crescendo of sound and emotion – one that regularly evokes shouting in the congregation – in the phrase “Gratefulness is flowing from my heart.” Another favorite expresses the conclusion, “I can’t pay the Lord, I have to tell him, ‘Thank you, Sir.’” This is the essence of shouting material – the overwhelming encounter between an infinite God and a human being who is fully aware of her limited power to influence the most important circumstances of her life.

Recorded Example 11 – “Gratefulness”
The Another Level Choir (28 May 2006)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(2)]

- 0:00-0:48 [Instrumental introduction]
- 0:48-1:52 *I am grateful for the things that you have done*
Yes I'm grateful for the victories you've won
I could go on and on and on about your word
Because I'm grateful grateful grateful just to have you Lord
Flowing from my heart
Are the issues of my heart
Is gratefulness
- 1:52-2:00 [Instrumental interlude]
- 2:00-3:00 *I am grateful for the things...*
... Is gratefulness
- 3:00-3:10 [Instrumental interlude]
- 3:10-5:36 *Grateful grateful grateful grateful*
Grateful grateful grateful grateful
Grateful grateful grateful gratefulness
Is flowing from my heart! [Repeated 8x]
- 5:36-6:12 [Instrumental interlude w/ exhortation from Rev. Gleason Rogers]
- 6:12-7:40 *Grateful grateful ...*
... Is flowing from my heart! [Repeated 5x w/ exhortation from Rev. Gleason Rogers]
- 7:40-8:02 *Flowing from my heart*
Are the issues of my heart
Is gratefulness
- 8:02-end [Instrumental conclusion w/ congregation]

Recorded Example 12 –“Thank You Sir”
Pastor Enoch Fuzz (10 February 2008)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(3)]

<i>There's so much</i> [Yeah] [Yes]	<i>All of my burdens</i> [Oh yes]
<i>That the Lord</i> [Yes]	<i>He helped me bear</i> [Yeah] [Say that]
<i>Has done for me</i> [Alright]	<i>All my sorrows</i>
Has he done it for you also? [Oh yes]	<i>He helped me share</i> [Yeah]
[Come on reverend] [Yes]	<i>I can't [pay the lord]</i>
<i>When I</i>	<i>I gotta tell him</i> [*Laughter*]
<i>Was a sinner</i>	<i>Thank you sir</i> [Alright reverend]
<i>He set me free</i> [Oh...] [Alright]	
<i>Yes he did</i>	<i>Mmmmm</i>

I would not [Alright] [Oh yes]
Be ungrateful [Yeah] [Alright]
After all [Oh...] [Yeah yeah]
The lord have done
Sister %% we glad to see you.
He gave me a little more courage [Alright]
[Yes he did]
For this Christian race to run
Well one thing
I can't forget [Alright] [Alright]
I know the Lord
Never failed me yet
I can't [Pay the lord]
Oh yeah [I got to tell him]
[Thank you sir]
You oughta say thank you sir

Mmmmm
He brought me from my childhood [Alright]
[Yeah]
Oh he brought be all along the way [Yes]
He been my shield [Yes]
Been my protection
I know the lord
Has been my stave
I coulda been [Dead]
Buried [in my grave]
Ohhhh he spoke one word [Yes he did]
Made death behave
I can't [Pay the lord]
Oh I gotta tell him
Thank you sir

You know, Sister %% was in the hospital
this week.
Ain't god alright? I wanna say thank you
sir. [Alright] [Amen]
Amen.
Listen.
Sister %%%
Lives by herself
She hasn't been here since
This year
This whole year [Alright]

Stand up Sister %%% I hope you don't
mind
[*applause for Sister %%%*] [Yes] [Yes]
Oh he spoke one word
Made death behave
I can't [Pay the lord] Ohhh
I gotta tell him Yes sir
[Thank you sir]
Sister ? thank you for visiting us here
Ohhhh Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
Brother Kelly
Thank you Lord [Thank you Lord]
Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
Thank you Lord [Thank you Lord]
You been mighty nice [Yes] to me [Yes] yes
you have [Alright]
Ohhh I know the lord been my all in all
I coulda been dead buried in my ohh...
[Grave]... hhh!
He spoke one word
Made death behave
I can't [Pay the lord]
Ohhhh yeah! [I gotta tell him]
I'm gonna tell the lord
Thank you sir
Mmmmmmmmm
I would not [Yeah] [Alright]
Be ungrateful [Yeah] [Yes sir]
After all the lord have done [Yes he did]
You know he gave me a little more courage
[Alright] [Alright]
For this Christian race to run
Ohhhh one thing
I can't forget [yes]
You know the lord
Never failed me yet [Yes sir]
I can't [Pay the lord] oh yeah
[I gotta tell him] I gotta tell him
Thank you sir
Somebody just come on and just say thank
you sir
Ohhhh thank you jesus [Thank you Jesus]

Thank you lord [Thank you Lord]
 Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
 Thank you lord [Thank you Lord]
 You been mighty nice [Yes] [Yes]
 Yes you have [Yeah]
 Ohhhh I know the lord been my my all in
 Hey I coulda been [Dead...]
 Haa... [...buried in my grave]... aay yeah
 You spoke one word
 Didn' he do it? Hey!
 I can't [Pay the Lord I gotta tell him]
 Oh yeah
 Yes I can't [Pay the Lord I gotta tell him]
 Oh y'all don't hear me.
 I can't [Pay the Lord I gotta tell him]
 Lord I gotta tell him yes! [Thank you sir]
 [Alright]

Mmmmmmmmm
 Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
 Mmmm [Thank you Lord]
 Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
 Mmmm [Thank you Lord]
 Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]

Thank you Lord [Yes] [Thank you Lord]
 Thank you Jesus [Thank you Jesus]
 Thank you Lord [Thank you Lord]
 I coulda been [Dead buried in my grave]
 Ohhh I coulda been [Dead buried in my
 grave]
 Ohhh I coulda been dead buried [In...]
 In... my grave
 Ohhhh he sp [one word] [one word]
 Made death behave [That's right]
 Oh I can't [Pay the Lord...] Oh yeah [.../]
 gotta...] Tell Kim [...tell him]
 Yes I can't [Pay the Lord I gotta tell him]
 Tell somebody how glad
 I can't [Pay the lord I gotta tell him]
 Ohhhh and I can't pay [the lord I gotta tell
 him]
 You oughta tell ?? that I said that to him
 I can't pay the Lord I gotta tell him.
 [Thank you sir] [Oh yes]
 Amen.
 Amen.
 Amen.

Sermons, songs, and powerful prayers are often involved in people's recognition of shouting material. In the following excerpt, Vanessa Crony describes a song that answered her specific needs with a promise that God would take care of her as one of her earliest experiences with shouting material.

VC: But the first time I ever had to go through something on my own - and I hope this will help you answer your question - and I heard a song that related to what I had been going through that told me everything was gonna be okay and that God has brought you this far he's gonna get you on [snaps] that's what'll make you shout. That'll get all into your spirit and say, "Oh my God, you've always had the answer." You know, and you're just saying and it goes into a praise. It's like, "Thank you, God. I don't have to do this by myself."

The circumstances of this event are significant. Vanessa describes being alone encountering a problem for the first time. Although she does not specifically mention prayer here, she introduces it as a part of a discussion featuring her close relationship with God – a relationship that she performs through prayer, musical performance, and scriptural study. Vanessa hears the song as shouting material because it solves one problem – the problem of

being alone with a problem – and promises an eventual resolution to the other unnamed problem based on faith that God would not bring her this far to leave her.

Pastor Fuzz quotes lyrics from one of his favorite songs to explain shouting material as “the message that, “Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime but I know Jesus will fix it after a while.” Desperate grief and painful loss is certainly one cause for the shouting that occurs so often during home going services or even in hospital rooms when families lose loved ones. These most extreme moments of need are unusual as contexts for shouting in a couple of ways. Usually people who shout react to need with prayer, and usually when they shout it is not a call for help, but instead a response to help received. Even in grief though, shouting routinely comes in response to preaching or singing that reminds mourners of the shouting material that defined their loved ones’ lives or offers comfort in their deaths.

MS: I think [the people who shout at funerals] are mostly shouting from the sermon that the pastor have preached or a song that someone has sung, and they get happy over that. But on the inside they really sad over they loved one. But they know that they loved one is in a safe place, and that makes them happy and they shout. But it’s mostly what the service is about, mostly.

...

I shouted at my mother’s funeral. I think it was Morgan Bab that sung a solo at her funeral. It just made me – I was just – I was so happy of that song that he sung. And I knew my mother loved that song, and I knew she was at a better place and it made me feel so happy. I got to shouting and I shouted all over the place. Passed out and everything. [Laughter] I sure did. And it took me – oh, Lord – I mourned my mother’s death for many years. And right now on certain holidays and stuff, I get to crying. It just brings up her and the things that she did on those days and everything. And I’ll just be so sad and be crying and just praising the Lord all that day long. Cause I know she’s happy and that made me happy. And I just rejoiced over her being in heaven. But I know she wasn’t here and I wanted her to be here, but I knew God wanted her to be there. So that part made me sad. And I thank God today that I realize that she’s at a better place.

Sister Shannon’s personal and general explanations of shouting at funerals ties this shouting back into the general model.

The Christian belief in salvation through Christ is the foundation and the quintessential example of shouting material. It is the model that shows Jesus intervening to save each individual sinner from death by offering himself as a sacrifice. This belief – that Jesus willingly, lovingly sacrificed himself not just for humanity generally but for each believer specifically – informs the conversion experience that introduces believers to the frenzy as children. It also supports the interpretation of any significant life sustaining event as shouting material – comparatively minor acts of grace and mercy that reperform in

miniature the miracle of universal salvation.. Hope comes from the belief that God would not die for a person and then leave that person alone to suffer. When specific prayers seem to go unanswered the foundational example of shouting material – the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus at the core of Corinthian’s Christian faith – offers an opportunity to find joy in the process of suffering, grief, and bereavement.

The promise of life after death makes death an end to suffering but not an end to life. The loss that Sister Shannon describes in reference to her mother’s death and death in general becomes a reason to get happy – the separation of mother and child is temporary, and she knows that her mother is in a better place, freed from suffering, waiting to welcome her. This understanding of life’s fragility and God’s goodness in spite of our imperfections shapes the music and prayer of Corinthian, and it constitutes another core of “shouting material” – guilt and relief.

EF: There’s one more person though – the person who shouts because of guilt. That’s why I mentioned psychology and religion. There’s some people who are shouting that are shouting because of guilt. Because they haven’t lived life in a way that they feel would be acceptable to god’s eyes. So they have a conviction that comes over them right in the middle of the song or the sermon or the message. And it causes the emotion. There’s those people that went to the nightclub and they’re at church and they’ve got this conflict. Some folk can come to church drunk and there’s no conflict. But there’s some folk who got drunk Saturday night and had to come to church Sunday morning even though they’re sober now they’re thinking about last night and there’s a conflict for them. And there’s a conviction that comes over them. I think it’s the same thing like with tears that it’s a cleansing, a healing or relaxing or letting go of “Hey, it’s gonna be alright – whew.”

(Interview, 19 January 2008)

Shouting as a faithful performance of religion is less about the action and more about the context and intention. Whether the action takes the form of “stamping, shrieking, and shouting,” or tears and a “Hey, it’s gonna be alright – whew” is less important than the conviction and release that provokes the shouting and the intention of surrendering to God’s will, giving thanks for God’s grace and mercy, and giving others evidence that God is in the vicinity.

Looking for a Miracle

People shout when they notice God working in their lives. They shout when they remember those miraculous interventions. Shouting and the broad range of performative gestures that comprise the frenzy are the actions of people who witness miracles. They see miracles

because they look for them; they look for them because they have witnessed them in the past. Put simply, miracles are shouting material, and people whose needs have been transformed into problems by systems of racism and poverty understand that sometimes just surviving is a miracle. People who actively depend on God from time to time for food or shelter are more likely to credit God with sustaining their lives in other ways. This mindset is a part of Corinthian's culture, one that extends beyond the desperate financial or medical needs that a few members might be experiencing on any given week. It extends to influence most of the congregation, instilling in them an awareness of the possibility of miracles in the mundane events of daily life.

Pastor Fuzz recognizes a number of events in his life as miracles; he even put them on a bookmark that he distributed on the occasion of his 30th anniversary in ministry:

Twelve Miraculous Things in My Thirty Years of Ministry

1. Asked God to change 33rd Avenue into a two way street and He did it.
2. The 1st time I visited Corinthian, June 1975 because the other guy couldn't come.
3. Walk thru the snake bed to teach me to focus on my goals and not my enemies.
4. Indianapolis Billy Graham Crusade meeting God changed the time by one hour so that I would not be late. I was representing Him. He also had a reserve parking and tour guide for me there.
5. Daughter Bethani born healthy. This is thought as the #1 miracle.
6. All expenses paid trip to Baltimore and Washington to tour health promotion ministry.
7. The old minister who lived next door healed my ear aches. I was 4 or 5 years old.
8. Special friends and certain people placed in this ministry. (He knows who they are.)
9. Annual Day Celebrations at the church always work out and are miraculously successful.
10. That Monday Revival night I didn't have a sermon and after church a man came up and said, "that was the best sermon I ever hears", and then a woman who shook my hand and fainted, and the usher who started shouting when she went to assist the fainted woman. I knew I had nothing to do with any of it so I just walked away.
11. Atheist paid my 1st semester in Bible School.
12. Once I asked the Lord to send an angel to help me. I didn't see nothing or no one but at the end of the day I knew God's angel had intervened on my part.

(Fuzz 2003 *Celebrating Thirty Years in Ministry* Bookmark)

Some of these miracles are obviously remarkable events: the atheist who paid for his tuition and insurance at American Baptist College or the redirection of 33rd Avenue in response to prayer. Other miracles like "special friends" and the invisible angelic assistance say more about Pastor Fuzz's perspective than they do about any uncanny occurrences. The fourth miraculous thing, "God changed the time by one hour," illustrates both a series of notable events and a particularly faithful way of noticing those events.

EF: So we were to meet at the Denny's at 1:00, and we were going to pull out in my car with the engine light on and drive to Indianapolis. I just went on and pulled up, and at 2:00 the guy hadn't showed and he wasn't answering his phone, and nobody was. So I said, "Okay, Lord. I'm gonna have to do this." So I jumped on the interstate and headed to Indianapolis. Didn't know where I was going, and I'm talking about a church too. So, I could feel something special in my car though, and I thought, "I sure don't want to do this here. Boy, how'd I get tangled up in this? Well, when I got to the split where it says 24 and 65, I wasn't sure which one to take, and the car went the right way by itself. I know that's nutty, but it did. It actually started driving itself. And I said, "O-kay. Jesus, I'm sorry. I'm not gonna complain. I really don't want to do this, but I'm going for you. And you know, it's not about — I'm just going for you, so just take over. That was pretty cool what you just did there. That's what I said. I'm an hour behind. I'm an hour late. And you know what, I see now that I could probably ask you to turn back the hands of time and you'd do it, but I'm not gonna ask you to do that. I'm just saying, I'm doing this for you, so you just make everything okay. Where I'm going, I'm not sure, but you just fix it for me. I just said that I was supposed to meet these four or five white guys for dinner at the RCA Dome. I said, a restaurant named the RCA Dome, anybody will probably know where that is once you get to Indianapolis — the RCA Dome, what a name, okay?"

I'm driving, and, man, I'm supposed to be there like at 5:00. When I get into Indianapolis, the sign on the interstate said, "The RCA Dome." I said, "Wow. What a restaurant. It must be a historic restaurant or something." That's what I said. I pull off at that ramp and there's a parking space as soon as I pull off, and then I see the RCA Dome — I said, "Oh, that's a football stadium. Okay." There's a parking space, the only one, just that one parking space there, and I look at my clock and it's about ten minutes after six. So I ask the security guard, I say, "Listen, I need to be in this place. I'm supposed to meet with some Billy Graham people or something."

He says, "Well, the gates don't open until a little after six."

I say, "Well, it's ten after six now."

And he says, "No it's only five o'clock." Indianapolis does not do daylight savings time. Well, you know, but in my brain, I said, "Wow. You turned back — what is going on here?" You know, I was kinda scared at that point. And he explained to me that they don't do daylight savings time. Wow. But he turned back the hands of time. So everything's —

And I said, "Well, I know I'm supposed to meet them at five o'clock for dinner."

And he said, "Well, the only thing I can tell you is to go up to that line up there." There was a huge line of folk waiting for the gates to open.

I walked up there and I had the names on a piece of paper, and I handed them to this security guy and he said, "Well, I hear you, but there's nothing I can do right now. You'll just have to wait."

And he turned and I said, "Oh, Lord..."

And he said, "Well, listen, I tell you what, you come on and go with me." And he said, "Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me." And he escorted me through hundreds of people and took me around this... We're walking and people are calling him on his walkie-talkie and he'd say to

them, “Listen here, can’t you people do anything? I have this man from Nashville, Reverend Fuzz, and I need to get him to where he’s supposed to be. Y’all handle it, please.”

And I said, “Wow.” He was the chief of security. So I knew that I was just in a very special place, and I said, “Boy, these guys, they missed out.”

In this narrative, Pastor Fuzz credits God with at least a half-dozen miraculous interventions: sustaining and navigating a broken-down car, revealing the location of the meeting to be an NFL stadium with its own exit from the interstate, saving him a parking space, and putting him in the hands of the chief of security who parted a sea of humanity to bring him safely to dinner. These are all secondary to the miracle that made it onto the bookmark: turning back the hands of time by keeping him in the dark about Indianapolis’s idiosyncratic disregard for daylight savings time. The pattern of problem, prayer, salvation and celebration cycles through his narrative; problems emerge, Pastor Fuzz turns conversationally to God, the problem is resolved, and Pastor Fuzz says, “Wow.” Pastor Fuzz’s perspective is an exceptional example of the type that looks for God’s agency in what others might call ordinary good fortune, but he is surrounded by like-minded people at Corinthian.

Listen to the final few minutes of a performance of “I’m Expecting a Miracle” from Corinthian’s 2008 Mother’s Day service and Pastor Fuzz’s transitional remarks afterward. The lyrics speak to a daily expectation of miracles. The enthusiasm of the choir, the frenzied congregational response, and Pastor Fuzz’s interpretation of the song mark that expectation as a significant belief for Corinthian.

**Recorded Example 13 – “I’m Looking For A Miracle” [abridged]
Corinthian Mass Choir w/ Vanessa Croney (11 May 2008)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, TN [CD2(4)]**

I’m looking for a miracle

I expect the impossible

I feel the intangible

I see the invisible [3x]

The sky is the limit to what I can have [3x]

Just believe and receive it

God will perform it today

Hey hey

Just believe and receive it

God will perform it today

I expect a miracle every day

*God will make a way out of no way [2x
sopranos, 2x altos, 2x tenors, 3x all
parts w/ Vanessa]*

I expect a miracle

I expect a miracle

I expect a miracle

I expect a miracle

I expect a miracle every day

God will make a way out of no way [3x]

I expect a miracle every day

God will make a way out of no way [2x]

Just believe and receive it

God will perform it today

Hey hey

Just believe and receive it

God will perform it today [2x]

Recorded Example 14 – Comments following “I’m Looking for a Miracle”

Pastor Enoch Fuzz (11 May 2008)

Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, TN [CD2(5)]

EF: Amen

Amen

Now y’all can’t just sing that song

And don’t believe that God does miracles

And wake up in the morning and miss

The miracle that you’ve been expecting

Amen

Miracles don’t always look like

What we think they ought to look like

Amen

Just you wakin up this morning

Mighta been

Somebody’s miracle, wasn’t it?

Or even our being here today

Isn’t that a miracle?

Amen

Through many dangers

May not be you, but me

Through many dangers

Toils and snares

I’ve already come

And I tell you what it was a miracle

God’s grace is a miracle I tell you

This day that we observe right now

That’s a miracle

A momma is a miracle

A momma putting up with some of us

Ain’t that a miracle?

A momma being able to hold up

Up under some of us

Yes it is, isn’t it lady?

That’s a miracle

Amen...

However one chooses to explain it, Corinthian’s congregants know better than most Americans that things could be worse. They have seen the dangers, toils, and snares, and they credit God in large part for the fact that things are as good as they are. It is not simply a question of whether a glass is half-empty or half-full. At Corinthian, people generally praise God for the quarter-full glass that could have been empty; they thank God for the empty glass because it could have been broken glass; they thank God for the broken glass because it did not cut them. The most basic expression of this perspective comes when Pastor Fuzz reminds the congregation that God did not have to wake us up this morning; any day, any hour, any second might be your last, so every moment of life is charged with an element of wonder. The dominant theology and ontology of Corinthian is such that many

people embrace the mystery of life's fragility as habitually as many Americans ignore it. The fact that God *did* wake Pastor Fuzz and the rest of the congregation on that May morning is a mundane miracle and proof of God's goodness.

This idea permeates the preaching, prayer, music, and even casual conversation at Corinthian. Notice how it emerges in Harmon's response to a seemingly unrelated question about the relationship between religion and music:

HS: Well, for me, being that I'm a musician, everything I do, even the way I walk, I hear the rhythm, I walk to a beat. When I wake up in the morning – I mean – first thing I do – course give thanks to God for waking me up - and when I feel that joy, what he's given me, I can't help but have a song in my heart.

A quick survey of Corinthian's music reveals that Harmon would have a vast selection of songs from which to choose to express his particular appreciation for God waking him up in the morning. Even the few songs that I include in this dissertation offer several strong candidates. Sister Mattie Shannon sings that "somebody's gone that was here last year." (See Ch. I) Deacon Woodruff leads the congregation to sing that they "could have been gone." (See Ch. III) Other standards at Corinthian, perhaps most notably Pastor Fuzz's signature fusion of "I'll Fly Away" and "The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow," highlight God's power and promise to transcend suffering by "making a way" or by not waking someone up "one of these mornings." Pastor Fuzz seems to embrace the prospect of a morning when God chooses not to wake him up as a miracle also.

Corinthian's openness to miracles extends beyond an existential appreciation for the wonder of life and death. This extended narrative about Vanessa's call to nursing as a ministry illustrates similar attitudes about God's role in people's daily lives, closing with an observation on faith that echoes Pastor Fuzz's earlier emphasis on problems.

VC: When I say I was called into nursing, I know I was called because of how I got there. I knew I always wanted to be in the hospital. Nobody in my family is in the medical profession, but I've always been fascinated with those, you know, medical TV shows – the real ones and the drama ones – like the ERs and the "Trauma – Life in the ERs" things. I did the nurse tech thing for a while. I was a clerk. When I got to St. Thomas I was actually a licensed cosmetologist working in a shop doing hair, and I went. I thought, "I need a part time job" and I went to look for a part time job and ended up taking a class to be a clerk associate which is also a medical receptionist.

And they told me, "If you take the job at St. Thomas then you won't have to pay for the class if they hire you."

And I was like, "Okay." So I took the class.

And I don't even know how I had time to do it. That's what I mean by things don't make sense how it added up. So I took the class and I made a 98 and the teacher was a nurse and she said, "You need to be a nurse because this was too easy for you. It's in you. I can tell."

And I was like, "Yeah. I've been told that before."

Vanessa interprets her vocation as a calling – not chance, coincidence, or dumb luck, but a calling. As with Pastor Fuzz's drive to Indianapolis, time behaves strangely for Vanessa when she begins working toward her nursing career. Vanessa does not suggest that time stood still, but she also does not credit herself with a great accomplishment for managing a busy schedule and excelling in her course work. She interprets this outcome and the encouragement of her teacher as a sign that she was on the right track.

VC: Anyway, I went on to St. Thomas. Nobody ever talked to me about nursing school. I just started investigating it. Found out that they would pay for me - gave me a full ride. They won't do that for anybody to this day. It doesn't even make sense how I got to school. I paid – for the three years I was in school I paid two thousand dollars tops out of my pocket. That was it. That was it. I went to the financial aid - I didn't have a loan. St. Thomas gave me a scholarship every semester. I went to the financial aid office to find out how much my books were. They were almost a thousand dollars, and I said, "I don't have it." They went into the computer, did something, gave me a scholarship. Never paid for my books. I mean it was unreal. They call me at work the little miracle child, you know, because nobody could believe it. Nobody could believe it.

Again, things do not make sense. Vanessa receives impossible scholarships. Her needs are met in mysterious ways, earning her a nickname among her colleagues – the little miracle child.

VC: The last two semesters of school, St. Thomas stopped giving the scholarships away and they were only giving partial scholarships away which they had been doing that for other people anyway. I had to be the only one given a full ride. They started giving – knocking them off because everybody was going to school. So they – they paid for – they sent me a letter that said they were going to pay \$375 of my tuition. My tuition was almost six thousand dollars a semester. I looked at the letter and laughed. I just bust out laughing. And other people were coming to me that were in my class saying, "What're you gonna do? What're you gonna do?" Cause they were in school too. What are you going to do? People were selling their boats, taking out second mortgages on their house.

I was like, "I don't know. I'm not worrying about it." I wasn't.

My mom even said, you know, "What are you gonna do?"

I was like, "I'm not gonna worry about it." God'll take care of it. He got me this far. Surely this second – You know I'm two semester away, he is not – No, it was my last semester. I said, "He is not going to - He didn't bring me this far to leave me like that." I said - I really did not worry about it.

Vanessa continues to see divine intervention in her school funding. Budget cuts and \$6000 tuition bills do not panic her as she expresses her trust through a variation on a common phrase at Corinthian. Having credited God with bringing her through two and a half years of nursing school, she trusts that God will finish the job.

VC: I came to work one day. I kid you not. And they said, “Vanessa, there’s a message for you.”

I said, “Okay.” It was a business card and it was the chief nursing executive officer of the hospital. And I thought, “What in the world?” Cause I was working as a nurse extern which is like a nurse assistant. And I thought, “What in the world did I do? What do they want?” [I] said, “What?” [I] called her. She wasn’t there. [I] kept getting her secretary.

Finally she calls me back, and everybody’s like, “What she say? What she say?”

[I] said, “She wants to meet with me.”

[They said] “Oh my God. Go! Go! Go!”

So I went up there and I met with her and I’ll never forget it. She said, “I know we’ve been doing a lot of cuts in tuition and everything.” And she said, “But I’ve heard nothing but good things about you and I just wanted to hear your story.”

And I was like, “I don’t have a story.”

You know, and she said, “Well, people are saying it’s going to be hard for you to pay for school, and I just wanted to hear from you because we need to be making some changes and I need to, you know, I want to take this to the president and see if there’s something we can do to help people out so we don’t have to keep going through this with people and see if there’s anything that I can do for you to help you.” She said, “Actually, the money — the checks have been sent so we really don’t have it in our budget to pay for any more, but I just kinda want to hear your story.”

I think she was looking for a sad song, cause I said, “Well I’ve already registered.”

And she said, “Excuse me?”

I said, “I already registered for my classes.”

She said, “How did you register and didn’t pay?”

I said, “I registered, and I didn’t pay.”

She said, “Aren’t you scared they’re gonna purge your classes?”

I said, “No ma’am.”

And she said, “Why not?”

I said, “Because God has —” I said, “I don’t mean to be —” What’s the word I threw? I said, “I’m not trying to be religious even though I’m in a faith based hospital. I’m not trying to be religious and I’m not trying to be funny.” I said, “God’s brought me this far.” I said, “And I’ve been at this hospital too long and I know that he’s gonna make a way for me. I don’t have any sad stories to tell. I just know that I’m gonna go to school and I’m gonna finish.”

She walked up to me and she shook my hand and said, “Thank you very much.”

This is no joke, Jeff. Cause it doesn’t — this doesn’t make sense because it didn’t have time to get there. When I went to school — oh no — the very next day I went to the mailbox and there was a letter of approval of them sending a check to cover the rest of my tuition. I mean, I talked to her at two o’clock in the evening. There was no time for that letter to get to the mail and to my house. There was a letter saying that my tuition had been paid for. And I walked up to school and handed them the letter and I went to class. So I was running around here on Sunday. “Thank you Jesus!!”

So, I mean, that’s how I knew that was a calling for me, it’s like, God was like, “I got you.”

You know, it’s like, my momma and my dad was like, “Your faith is unbelievable.”

I said, you know what, I tell people faith doesn’t come by choice. It just doesn’t. I believe faith comes when you don’t have another choice. When you don’t have any other choice. I said, “I didn’t get faith because, ‘Oh I just really want to believe in god.’” It was - You don’t have any other options. This is what you got. You got: your life is doomed or trust God and let him do it. And it was like, well yeah, it was a choice, but it was still like, I don’t have anything else. And that’s how it worked out for me.

Vanessa’s story ends with shouting and an insightful analysis of faith that both begin with problems and move through prayer to salvation. Vanessa, like Pastor Fuzz’s “Aunt Caroline” walks by faith, riding trains without tickets and waiting fearlessly for God to pay her tuition. She does it, as she explains, because she has no other choice. Vanessa narrates a faith that weaves inextricably through the extraordinary events in her life, sustained by her interpretation of positive outcomes and sustaining her in the face of problems.

People at Corinthian attribute positive outcomes and helpful interventions to God’s agency, perhaps because many of them live as witnesses to the varieties of misfortune that strike low-income African American communities and individuals with disproportionate, even seemingly-malicious frequency. Many members of this congregation have personal histories that document the 20th century’s failure to fully overcome racism and poverty. Many also bear witness to friends and family members who experienced those failures in catastrophic ways — ones that led to illness, incarceration, or death.

Making a similar observation about an AME congregation in the 1990s, Timothy Nelson suggests that,

...they did not compare their situation with those whites or blacks living in the suburbs and holding down professional jobs, but to other urban African-Americans who were homeless, in jail, unemployed, on drugs, or recipients of public welfare. (1997: 21)

Corinthian's congregation seems to be more socioeconomically diverse than the congregation referenced here – Corinthian's congregation includes members living outside of Nashville and members with professional jobs as well as members on public assistance and members who are incarcerated – but Corinthian's congregation certainly has ready access to peers and loved ones who are worse off than they are by many measures. Pastor Fuzz occasionally reinforces this awareness, asking, "Don't you know there are folks who'd trade places with you?" Even routine questions like, "How are you?" reveal this perspective when they elicit responses like, "Blessed and highly favored" from people who deal with significant hardship on a daily basis.

Other Frenzies

EF: There are a lot of people who never say, "Amen," but who are sitting there and they may have just goose bumps. Some people just sitting there you'd never know that they have tears just everywhere.

Not every person who might be "seized by the spirit" shouts out loud. Du Bois allowed for "the silent rapt countenance" and "the low murmur and moan." Pastor Fuzz expands this to include silent tears and goose bumps and acting on the sermon's message throughout the week. He points to his chairman of deacons, Deacon Benjamin Flagg, as an example of a person whose shouting is in his service.

EF: Now there's some folk though, their shouting is in their service. Did you hear what I said? There's some people their shouting is in their service. Sometimes I say this. Who do I want? The guy who's a Flagg who sits there with his arms folded and I never hear that Amen very much encouraging me to go on another thirty minutes, but when somebody's in the nursing home, he's the person that goes to them. One of the customers can't come I anymore, he goes to the hospital and cut their hair. He's the one who goes to every funeral. Which person is most beneficial to the church? Work. Cause people like the charismatic churches too. And they'll take a Deacon Flagg and say, "They dead and dry." But who's dead and dry? Deacon Flagg who does the work that Jesus say do, or that person that shouts and has the ushers doing all the work? I ask that question some, and I think there's gotta be, you know, it'd be great to get some of both in both of them.

Deacon Flagg is a World War II veteran who grew to be a pillar of Corinthian's congregation when he settled in Nashville after attending Tennessee State University. Deacon Flagg owns and operates a barber shop in southeast Nashville just across the road from one of the city's older, concrete-tower-style housing projects. Flagg's Barber Shop has occupied the same building for over half a century, and "Mr. Flagg," as most of his

customers call him, commands the respect of customers ranging from teens in baggy pants and oversized coats to distinguished old gentlemen in felt hats whose sons and grandsons received their first haircuts from Deacon Flagg's steady hands. Deacon Flagg speaks softly and deliberately with customers, his deep but wispy bass voice just audible over the buzz of his clippers and the background of syndicated court TV programs.

With the income from his barbershop and her career in healthcare, Deacon Flagg and his outgoing wife, Sister Genora Flagg live Corinthian's version of the American Dream. They own their own home just outside of Nashville, one that they purchased after living in North Nashville for decades. During my field research, the Flaggs bought a beautiful silver Jaguar. Their grown daughters are confident, successful, church-going professionals. Deacon Flagg teaches the Men's Sunday School Class. Sister Flagg is also active with the Sunday School and various other church auxiliaries, including the Beautifying Committee and the Pastor's Aid Society. The Flaggs contribute quietly but consistently with their finances to support Corinthian through tithing and through contributions to special fundraising projects. They love and support their pastor as they love and serve their church – with a quiet, unswerving intensity.



Figure 69: Deacon Benjamin Flagg

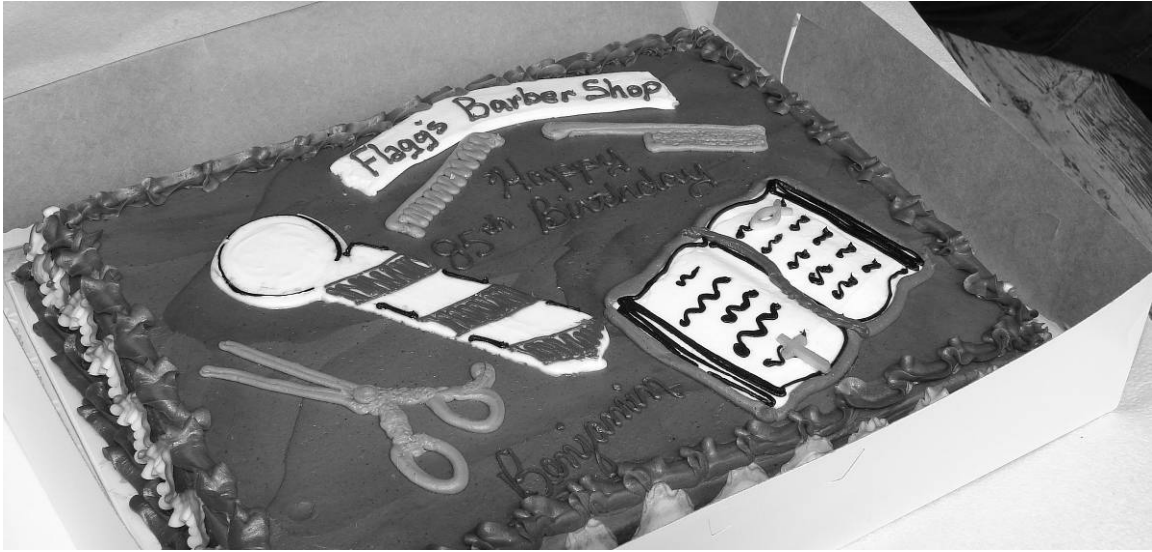


Figure 70: Deacon Flagg's 85th birthday cake decorated with symbols of his barber shop and a Bible



Figure 71: The Flaggs' Jag

Pastor Fuzz could not describe Deacon Flagg's service as shouting if he thought that the physical and vocal gestures in Du Bois's description were the core of shouting. Returning to my operative model of performance, Pastor Fuzz focuses here on the intent and context of Deacon Flagg's visits to hospitals and funerals. He interprets Deacon Flagg's

service as a successful effort to do “the work that Jesus say do.” According to Pastor Fuzz, that is shouting too.

EF: There are others though, who hear the sermon and they listen to it all week and they go out and try to do what was in that sermon, and I think that’s shouting too. Or, that person who never says “amen” except maybe you’ll hear one or two amens out of that person if it gets pretty loud, but throughout the week they’re out there doing what you’re talking about, and I think that’s shouting, and definitely it’s shouting material.

Pastor Fuzz generally favors doing “what Jesus say do” over talking about it. Throughout our private conversations and in his public statements both in the church and in the broader community he returns again and again to the idea that there has been enough talking about “it” – whatever problem “it” might be – and that simple, loving action will yield more benefits than continued conversation. Such a broad definition of shouting that includes “go[ing] out and try[ing] to do what was in the sermon” expands the relatively limited category of shouting churches and shouting congregants to an entirely different scale. Deacon Flagg’s regimented, disciplined service – both as a deacon and as an anchor for the community around his barbershop – reflects the diffuse, unpredictable individuality that Nelson highlights, but it differs significantly from the vigorous public displays that one typically associates with the frenzy. Some readers may not agree that quiet service to the dignity of the sick and the dead fits in the same category as shouting, dancing, and otherwise “getting happy,” but Pastor Fuzz does. If Deacon Flagg shouts by bringing dignity and company to the ill and comfort to the bereaved, then who else is shouting?

Returning to Nelson’s analysis of the diffuse corporate responsibility for answering a preacher with “Amens” during a sermon, the myriad other forms of collective improvisation that take place during a worship service also manifest elements of the frenzy.

HS: But as the choir – as the spirit starts to fill the choir, then the reaction in the congregation gets greater and they begin to - The choir rubs off on the congregation and then they get excited and get in tune and you can see them not only smiling but they’re shaking their heads and they’re starting clapping and all of a sudden I can look down here and there are feet patting and people stand up. So when the music is at such a level where we’re ushering in the spirit, not only for the choir members but for those out in the congregation who have not necessarily confessed Christ and been baptized, but when we’re moving in such a way where the spirit is here, it’s a feeling that comes over you and you just know. The music is in tune. Craig’ll be doing something here on the drums and all of a sudden he’ll do a break and I’m doing the break with him, and EJ does that same break, but we didn’t say anything to anybody. That’s the spirit of God. The spirit of God is telling us, “Okay, let’s just break. Let’s do something.” And then all of a sudden Gleason tells the choir to go one way. I might not have understood anything he was trying to tell

me, but when he tells the choir to go that way we just all go that way. Even though I don't know what he's talking about. I don't know what he meant. We never rehearsed it. He just says, "Go over here to left field" and all of a sudden the spirit just moves us over to left field.

Harmon describes the cascading frenzy pulling the instrumentalists along with the choir. At other times, a song will percolate back up after the director or the soloist ends it.

VC: And then there's time when they're not to that point but they're getting there, and you can end the song, but know that - The Holy Spirit just tells you that it's not time to end it. You can end it, but we come back in again because it's almost like you played the song on a tape and you're like, "I wanna hear that again." You know, somebody behind me wanted to hear some more of that. And it's not me. It's just the Holy Spirit saying, you know, "Somebody was getting ready to get a breakthrough on that. Let's run some more of that." And we'll come back in if I'm not already dancing out the door.

JS: How does that happen? Cause I'll see the song's over and then — this happened, I want to say this happened during choir day — you'd gotten back up around and I think you were back in your seat and the choir and — where does that come from? How does that start back up?

VC: Well, when I ended the song, I believe that whole band was just in a whole other spirit of really feeling that song and the congregation was in that same — as for me, I was just trying to end it really because I knew Reverend Fuzz was getting ready to preach and so I didn't want to take up a lot of time before he preached. I wanted to minister the song and be done. And so when they came back in with the song, I thought, "Oh boy. Here we go." And so, I still — it was the Holy Spirit led me back to that microphone and, you know, I don't even remember what I said, but I said what I said and sang it and then it's just then something was like, "Okay. Now we can finish the song?"

Harmon and Vanessa's observations each illustrate a concept that Nelson addresses as "circular reaction." Circular reaction is essentially identical to Mitchell's analysis of the congregation's role in encouraging and elevating a preacher's performance. The enthusiasm of the congregation's response intensifies the preacher's call which elicits still more enthusiastic responses as the congregation and the preacher build toward the climax.

Shouting and dancing are the most dramatic expressions of the frenzy, but these more subtle manifestations are more widespread and, arguably more important. They introduce a subtle anarchism that counterbalances the officially hierarchical leadership structure of the church. The cascading feedback loop of congregational frenzy can create the conditions for shouting and dancing out of the raw material of a few polite "amens" when a congregation unites behind a preacher or a singer. Likewise, a deacon's visit to a bereaved family or a card of encouragement from a church member might become shouting material days or weeks later. The same loaves-and-fishes potential exists for conflict.

Harmon and Vanessa each emphasized their responsibility for keeping the choir and the

musicians “on one accord” in order to effectively minister to the congregation, but anecdotal accounts suggest that conflicts between individuals or institutions within churches are more than theoretical possibilities. During our formal interviews and more casual conversations about his experiences as the pastor at Corinthian, Pastor Fuzz repeatedly mentioned the need for unity in the congregation, often explaining that a handful of discontented members could cause serious division in the church.

I was surprised to hear Pastor Fuzz take issue with Mitchell’s statement that “Not only is it easier to preach in the midst of authentic dialogue; but also the quality of preaching increases.” Discussing this quote, Pastor Fuzz first affirmed the power of a responsive congregation to “take the preaching to a different level,” but he also warned that the same enthusiastic response can steal a sermon away from a novice preacher. He also pointed toward counter-examples in masters of the African American pulpit tradition whose congregations are more likely to show their support by listening quietly than by shouting or dancing in the aisles:

EF: I’m not sure about that “quality of the preaching increases,” because Kelly Miller Smith, Frederick Samson, Gardner Taylor — I don’t think they had charismatic congregations. You know, First Baptist Churches are more stark and quiet. Their sermon would be like a lecture. First Baptists — Black First Baptists. But the sermon is very rich and very studied. The preacher who does not chant, who does not have the singing gift, compensates by deep study. So in their sermons is, I think, quality. I’m not so sure that the quality is better — I’m not going to say that one is better than the other. They both have their places. I’m pretty sure that if [a lecturing preacher] were here preaching at Corinthian, people might fall asleep — except Deacon Flag.

...

[Reading] “The richness of the Black pulpit tradition,” yeah, “is inextricably bound up with this oft overlooked resource, the congregation without whom the sermon event would be impossible.” Yeah, but the sermon event happens a lot in black churches like the Methodist Church — the United Methodist Church. There’s not much call and response there. The First Baptist Church there’s not much call and response, but the sermon is very rich and so is the worship experience for the people.

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The diversity of congregational performance that support exceptional preaching and facilitate meaningful worship experiences across the breadth of the modern Black Church suggests that the call and response of the frenzy deserves to be reconsidered. Many people searching for ways to respond to overwhelming encounters with the Invisible in the twenty-first century have more options than their ancestors enjoyed.

Scholars who hope to understand the ongoing development of African American branches of religiosity and their influence on other cultural systems must decide whether to restrict the frenzy to the acute explosions of joy and madness that Du Bois describes or to expand their gaze to include more chronic sacrifices of self and self-interest in response to experiences of God's love, grace, and mercy. I interpret Sister Mattie Shannon's desire to greet her neighbors during the week as a continuation of the frenzy she shouts on a Sunday morning. Sister Vanessa Croney's passion for nursing the people she calls "the sickest of the sick," is as dramatic a gesture as her shouting and dancing, and she describes all three as a response to God's call. These slow, steady, sustained responses link the extraordinary performances of shouting or dancing one's religion to the oft overlooked "ordinary" performances involved in living one's faith publicly – performances that are anything but ordinary.

The Frenzying Congregation

EF: And why do people shout and respond to it? There are a lot of reasons. Like Sister Ridley said, they shout because God is so good to them. They can't believe they made it. They want to make sure they give him the credit. And then some people it's just such a hard time that it's a relief. And the Black Church, people who come, many of them have had a very hard time that week. Whether it was with their husband, their wife, their family, their children. They didn't want to turn them over to the white folks. They handled their problems inside their communities. Their wives didn't call the judges. They would call the lord. And they'd go to church and they'd cry before him. And they'd shout when God had made a way for them. And they'd get up in the morning being very poor and they'd say "Thank you, Lord."

Corinthian is still a congregation where people wake up in the morning saying, "Thank you, Lord." It is still a place where people who experience hard times during the week come together on Sunday to thank God for bringing them through. It is still a congregation that calls on the Lord with their problems. It is a community that shouts when the Lord makes a way for them, but it is also a community that works to make a way for others.

Corinthian's congregation manifests the range of Du Bois's frenzy from Deacon Flagg's silent rapt countenance to Sister Mattie Shannon and Vanessa Croney's stamping, shrieking and shouting. Mother Cross stands and waves her hand to encourage the choir. Sister Sadie Tucker, dressed to the nines, punctuates prayers and sermons declaring, "well..." as she scans the congregation, anticipating and addressing the needs of the pulpit and the pews as the President of the Senior Usher Board. Sister Theresa and Brother Gerald

Wilson anchor a reliable “amen corner” in a back pew. Sister Lilly Richardson raises her hands, affirming the service and acknowledging her God. Deacon Woodruff alternates between conversation partner and commentator from his seat at the front of the sanctuary. The choir does their “support thing,” calling out encouragement and filling in the blanks for singers and preachers. Harmon, Craig, and EJ half-improvise a sacred soundtrack to prayer, preaching, and song. The ministers on the pulpit laugh and shout and Pastor Fuzz smiles, swats at the air and says, “Go ahead.” In the kitchen, James Perkins and a half dozen others prepare the meal in anticipation of the benediction. Dozens of others clap and sing and fellowship and laugh, welcoming friends and strangers with hugs and smiles. Every Sunday morning, the congregation faithfully performs the frenzy, surrendering a part of themselves to the celebration of their collective communion with God and their church family.

But Corinthian’s congregation carries the frenzy beyond the temporal and geographic boundaries of Sunday morning at Corinthian. Sister Peggy Petty refers people to a wide array of social services, guiding them through mazes of bureaucracy out of her desire to help others. Brother Bruce Wood works relentlessly for environmental justice for communities outside Nashville in which racism and poverty combined to rob African American communities of their access to unpolluted water. Across the city a young man prays for his church from jail. Eighty-something year old Mother Akins ministers to the gangs of young men on the street by her home, pulling the “baddest one” to the side to tell him that she loves him and does not want to see bad things happen to him. Sister Valeria Smith stands up for her fellow bus drivers as a union officer. Sister Rosalyn Stockdale volunteers to tutor science students as she prepares for medical school. Rev. Dr. Richardson spends decades ensuring that Tennessee State University students receive the funding and the education they deserve, serving as a mathematics professor and as a party to TSU’s civil rights era lawsuit against the Tennessee Board of Regents. Between Sundays, the frenzied congregation moves through the community, doing “what God say do,” putting the preaching and the music into practice across Nashville.

EPILOGUE

You turn to the epilogue, looking for direction. Where does this text take us? Where does the author want to go from here? He invites you back to the sounds of a Wednesday night and asks you to listen for the congregation. Listen to hear where they send us. Hear the music. Hear the preacher. Hear the frenzy. But listen deeper; there is someone else.

**Recorded Example 15 – “Over My Head”
Congregation and Deacon Nathaniel Woodruff (28 February 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(6)]**

Over my head I hear music in the air...

You hear the congregation in conversation. You hear the congregation singing about music, color, trouble and glory in the air. You hear them proclaiming their faith that “there must be a god somewhere.” You hear voices weaving between background and foreground around Deacon Woodruff’s lead. You hear the crackle of turning pages as individuals pick their songs and their readings for the evening. Plastic grocery bags rustle, Sister Genora Flagg passes through a doorway tending to the needs of the church and worrying about her pastor, and you hear that. All this is Corinthian. All this is the Black Church. “The type, of course, varies according to time and place,” as Du Bois reminds us, but this is also many other communities commonly identified by race and creed and wealth and politics. Like the music, the features held in common by communities everywhere were “adapted, changed, and intensified” by the experiences of the community profiled in this text, but “all this is nothing new in the world, but as old as religion,” and it is not strictly limited to communities defined by *religious* beliefs.

Later that same evening, Deacon Majors calls up another of the old songs that his daughter describes, singing out with a voice rough and rambling as the country roads of his youth, musicking his way past the old remembered landmarks. The voices weave in and out with deacons, preachers, musicians and ordinary people collaborating in a congregational hymn. The music of the singing and the hearing and the thinking and the feeling; the preacher who claps and stomps sings along, whose role as the carrier of God’s message for God’s people is celebrated and not questioned, whose daughter is the “pastor daughter” of

Deacon Majors's prayer; the Wednesday night frenzy of murmers and moans, "Yes Jesuses" and "Thank you Jesuses," the shouting material of problems rendered meaningful and manageable by proficient prayer and mindsets that sense seeds of miraculous salvation in the midst of struggle, the eyes that look to the hills: all these are Corinthian. They are the preacher, the music, the frenzy, and the congregation.

Recorded Example 16 – "Shine on Me" and Prayer
The Congregation featuring Deacon David Majors (28 February 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(7)]

Shine [Yes sir] on me [Yes oh yes]
Oh shine on me
I wonder [Wonder] if [Yes] the lighthouse will shine on me [Yes]
Oh [oh] shine [Oh yes] on me [Yes]
Oh shine on me [Oh yes]
I wonder if the lighthouse will shine on me [Yes sir yes sir] [Thank you Jesus thank you]
I heard the voice of Jesus say
*Come un-[*clapping*]-to me and rest*
Lay down thou weary one lay down
Thy head upon [Yes sir yes sir] my breast
Yes sir
Oh shine on me
Ohhh shine on me
I wonder if the lighthouse will shine on me
[Amen] [Amen]
Let us pray [Thank you Jesus thank you]
Oh God there was a time that
I would wonder
If the lighthouse shined on me [Yes Lord] [Alright deacon] [Yes Lord]
But I stand before you tonight [Yes Lord]
Saying I know that the lighthouse shine on me [Alright] [Yes]
I'm so grateful tonight dear God that we're able to come to thy house one more time [Yes]
[Thank you Jesus]
Lord we pray for the world [Lord Lord Lord]
So much disgrace so much hate [Mmm] so much bitterness [Mmm]
The devil seem to be so busy [Mmm] [Yes] [Jesus]
But I'm grateful Lord that we can still stand on your word [Yes] [Yes]
And call upon your holy name [Amen]
We pray for those Lord that's having difficulty tonight [Yes] [Mmm] [Yes Lord]
Those that've been put out of their homes [Lord yes] those that been burned out of their homes
[Have mercy] [Mmm] those that's having all kinds of problems [Have mercy] [Yes yes]
I pray Lord that they'll turn and look to the hills which cometh our help [Mmm] [That's right]

Realizing that all their help cometh from you [Yes Lord] [Thank you Jesus]
 Lord we're so busy in the world trying to accomplish all we can [Yes yes] [Yes]
 Without giving a thought to where it's coming from [Mmm hmm]
 Lord we thank you for being here tonight [That's right]
 We thank you Lord for those who was able to come [Yes] [Thank you]
 We pray for those that could come and didn't come [Mmm]
 Those that'd like to come that wasn't able to be here tonight [Amen]
 Then Lord we pray for our pastor that's gonna preach your word tonight [Yes yes] [Yes] [Jesus]
 We know Lord that you have given him a message [That's right] [Yes] that is gonna touch us
 tonight [Yes]
 Lord we are hungry and need to be fed [Oh yes] [Pray your prayer]
 We're so grateful Lord that you sent us a shepherd [Yes] that feeds us [Lift him up lift him up]
 never let us go hungry
 Lord help us to be obedient to thy word [That's right]
 Help us Lord to be a church [Yes] that you'll come back at us [Yes Lord]
 Lord help each of us tonight [Bless you] bless each home that's represented here [Yes yes] [Amen]
 Lord we pray for our pastor daughter [Yes Jesus]
 That you watch over her and all the young [Have mercy] people [Yes yes Lord] going through
 [Have mercy]
 Some are doing all they can [Yes] to be disruptive [Yes] and also [Yes]
 Lord they're just doing anything [That's right deacon] to try to get ahead [That's right deacon]
 But then Lord there's those that's working hard [*clapping*]
 Trying to make a difference tonight [Mmm hmm]
 Be with em tonight Lord [Yes]
 Let em know that it's a struggle out there [Mmm hmm]
 But at the end of the struggle [Alright] [Mmm hmm]
 Oh Lord let em know that you're always there [Yes]
 Bless em and keep em
 Then Lord again we pray for this service [Amen]
 And we pray again for each one that's here [Yes] [Thank you]
 Keep us Lord [Thank you]
 Let your grace fall upon us [Mmm] [Yes]
 In Jesus' name [Jesus]
 Amen [Amen] [Amen] [Amen] [Bless you Majors]

Wednesday night services are the closest thing a trip back in time that Corinthian offers. The old songs fill the sanctuary with the sounds of mature faith, faith that has informed lives stretching into seventh, eighth, and ninth decades. The services are shaped by memories of those decades – a collective half-millennium of lived experience and centuries of congregational service counting only the deacons and their wives. On this Wednesday night the seasoned faithful of the congregation point toward the future, remember young people –

their pastor's daughter and the others, "all the young people," the ones "working hard," and struggling to "make a difference tonight." The young people are the congregation too.

Some of those young people joined me and my wife on a trip to Atlanta one Sunday morning just as I had completed the four chapters of this dissertation. In a church van full of seven teenagers, a congregation emerged. Somewhere between Chattanooga and Atlanta, these seven young people began singing the choir songs. They sang the contemporary songs of the Mass Choir and the Another Level Choir. They sang the old songs made new by Harmon. They sang "Deacon Woodruff's songs" about having the love of Jesus in their hearts and about fellowshiping while they were here. They sang Pastor Fuzz's song about flying away and away, knowing that the Lord will make a way. They sang "Pray for Me," and that evening, they prayed thanks to God for a safe journey and asked God to wake them up again in the morning. They spent the 36-hour trip eating together, praying together, singing together, encouraging each other, and looking out for each other in a distant and sometimes hostile land. They also poked fun at each other and occasionally poked rolled-up aquarium programs at each other; teenagers will be teenagers. In short, they performed as a tiny congregation, a community of faith.

Du Bois wrote a century ago about the exceptional features of slave religion, naming them the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy. He wrote about the extraordinary leaders of communities, the extraordinary sounds of communities, and the extraordinary expressions of communities' faith, and in so doing obscured the ordinary people of those communities for most of a century. He articulated the features and functions of the Veil, but he left it standing between ordinary believers and the world beyond. He also wrote about the "American Negro," arguing that "he would not bleach his Negro soul...for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world" (11). He wrote in his "Credo":

Especially do I believe in the Negro Race; in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul and its strength in that meekness which shall yet inherit this turbulent earth. (1904: 214)

So, Du Bois, the man best associated with the talented-tenth and possessed of a confidence that inspired one of his references at Fisk to describe him as someone who projects "the impression of being conceited" (Gates 1999: 187) is also an obvious advocate for the inherent value of ordinary people.

The message of Negro Blood is that it is indistinguishable from any other category of human blood; the message of the unbleached soul is more complicated. It is not one

message but, at least at Corinthian, it takes shape as a constellation of complimentary and contradictory messages performed in grand gestures and fleeting glances. Du Bois begins the first essay in *The Souls of Black Folk* musing over the question, “How does it feel to be a problem?” The ordinary people at Corinthian spend their lives performing answers to the questions “How does it feel to have problems?” and “Where would I be without the Lord on my side?” Du Bois prefaces *The Souls of Black Folk* with a forethought that assigns “the problem of the color line” to the twentieth century. As the first decade of the twenty-first century speeds toward its conclusion, the ordinary people of Corinthian’s congregation faithfully and relentlessly perform a testimony to the twentieth century’s failure to answer Du Bois’s challenge; the color line and the related poverty line – whether measured in dollars or diplomas or days between birth and death – persists. But the congregation of Corinthian Baptist Church – whether gathered en masse for Sunday worship or in smaller groups for a choir rehearsal, a Wednesday night service, or an over-night trip to Atlanta – also perform their faith in God. They understand their god to be a god who manifests grace and mercy not in spite of the problems of an unfair and often cruel world, but by sustaining ordinary people through the unresolved problems of twenty-first century America.

The message at the heart of Corinthian’s faithful performance of religion is “Trouble in my way; I have to cry sometimes.” It is, “Okay, I’ll go.” It is, “We just love God. And we love you too. Thank you.” It is, “Thank you, Jesus,” and, “My father can lift up a bowed down head.”

**Recorded Example 17 – “Why You Look So Sad”
Sister Mattie Shannon and the Congregation (1 August 2007)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(8)]**

Why do you look so sad?
Why you look so sad?
You don't have to walk
With a bowed down head [Yes sir]
You ought to let him bring joy
Joy to your soul
So much joy
Joy joy joy
I believe that my father
My father can lift up your bowed down head [Come on]
Oh your bowed down head

And when you pray [Yes]
He will hear your prayer
He will hear your prayer [Yeah]
He will hear your prayer
Said he would [Come on] answer
In the bye and bye
In the by and by
In the by and by
You ought to let him bring joy
Joy to your soul
So much joy
Joy [to your soul] joy joy
I believe that my father
My father can lift up your bowed down head
Woah your bowed down head
Mmmm why do you look so sad?
Why you look so sad?
Yeah yeah yeah you don't have to walk
With a bowed down head
With a bowed down head
With a bowed down head
You oughta let him bring joy
Joy to your soul
So much joy
Joy [to your soul] joy joy
I believe that my father
My father can lift up your bowed down head
Ohhh your bowed down head
And when you cry
He will hear you cry
He will hear all your crying
He will hear your crying
Said he would answer
In the by and by [Said he would answer]
In the by by by
In the by and by
You ought to let him bring joy
Joy to your soul
So much joy
Joy joy joy
I believe my father
My father can lift up your bowed down head
Yeah your bowed down head

Mmm mmm mmm why you look so sad?
Why you look so sad?
Mmm don't have to walk [Come on baby]
With a bowed down head
With a bowed down head
With a bowed down head
You oughta let him bring joy
Joy to your soul [Joy joy]
So much joy
Joy joy joy
I believe that my father
My father can lift up a bowed down head
Yeah yeah yeah a bowed down head
Oh lord your bowed down head
Your bowed down head
He lift up your bowed down head
Lift your bowed down head
He lift up your bowed down head
??? bowed down head
He'll lift up your bowed down head
Lift your bowed down head
Oh why do you look so sad? [Alright]
Oh yeah yeah yeah you don't have to walk
With a bowed down head
You don't have to walk with a bowed down head
With a bowed down head
You just let him bring joy
Joy to your soul
I know he'll bring joy
Joy joy joy [To your soul]
I know he'll bring joy
Joy joy joy
He'll bring joy to your soul
Joy to your soul
 [Alright now] [Alright] [Alright] [Yes he will. So much joy!] [Alright now] [Alright baby] [Amen]
 [Alright great joy] [Alright alright alright]

EF: There is a word from the Lord...

It is a message worth hearing and a message worth listening for in the faithful performances that render visible, even if only darkly as through a veil, the beliefs that inform our lives and the lives of those around us.

APPENDIX A

“ORDINARY PEOPLE”

Recorded Example 18 – “Ordinary People”
Pastor Enoch E. Fuzz & Congregation (5 August 2008)
Corinthian Baptist Church – Nashville, Tennessee [CD2(9)]
(Congregational Response Omitted)

Amen.

Ain't God alright?

Ain't God _ alright.

Just imagine that we're here today _ not because we're good _ but because God is good.

Find our text _ in the Book of _ Judges

Chapter _ 13

Beginning at verse 1

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines. And there was a certain man of Zorah of the family of the Danes - the Dannites were the tribe of Dan — whose name was Menoah and his wife was barren and had not had children. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman and said unto her, “Behold now, thou art barren and beareth not. But thou shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine or strong drink and eat not any unclean thing. For lo thou shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come on his head for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb. And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”

I wanna read these verses in our hearing and preach the sermon today “Ordinary People”

Ordinary People

God use ordinary folk

Some people are striving to be _ the Mr. Big Shot

But I want you to know God will look over the big shot _ and choose me _ and choose you

If you will _ try not to be a big shot

Then God will make you a big shot

Won't he do it?

God use plain folk

He does

He use _ plain Janes _ and plain _ Nathaniels

Don't he?

He's not lookin for the big Ed _ Harding

He already know where you are Ed

He lookin for Little Ed

People who God can use __ are people who are small enough __ that self does not block God's way
 God can't get to a lot of us __ because self is a wall around us
 God uses plain Jane __ I don't know over here what we call them __ plain Kim
 Yes he does amen?
 God uses ordinary Eboni __ plain old Vivian
 God uses plain everyday people
 Some of us walking around looking for the Mr. Big Stuff __ when God is trying to get just you __ just like you are
 Look at the woman look at the many people throughout the Bible who God used __ folk that many of us wouldn't
 have anything to do with
 God used people who many times folk have complained to me "Reverend leave them folk alone"
 God used folk that sometimes people say "Reverend we don't need dem folk in us's church"
 Dem people gon mess up us's church"
 Now don'tcha know that let me show you some of the plain people that God used __ that Gleason would've saw em
 and went the other way
 There were two spies __ that Joshua sent __ over into the land of Jericho to spy it out
 And when they got into Jericho there was a woman by the name of Rahab __ who was __ of a __ unusual profession
 Yeah she wasn't a bank accountant
 She wasn't she didn't work at Vanderbilt
 She wasn't a nurse
 She wasn't even a housekeeper
 She was a prostitute
 And and and __ God used __ Rahab __ a prostitute __ I mean used her in a mighty powerful way
 Why did God use Rahab? You know I mean this is a woman that a prostitute, come on
 That God gonna use a prostitute
 See God doesn't look so much at our __ life __ as he does at our __ faith
 See Rahab had a messed up life __ but she had active faith
 A lot of us got messed up lives __ and our faith is messed up too
 Let me tell ya something. You can be the worst of people __ but if you believe that God is the greatest __ y'all don't
 hear me. He'll write it down that the first __ will be the last __ and the last will be first.
 God will take that one that everyone else step over __ step on __ don't want you to ride with em __ and you'll look
 up __ and they ridin ahead of you.
 Rahab had **active** faith.
 Too many of us we judge people because we don't like their lifestyle.
 Come on now.
 There are __ some parts. There's a movie.
 I haven't seen all of it. It's kinda boring. But it's got Robin Williams in it and he's a cutter.
 Some of y'all might know. But anyway it's in the future and what they put an implant in the baby when it's born
 and it records every moment of the child's a person's life.
 And at death that implant is put on their tombstone so that when people go by they can view __ the memories of
 that person's life.
 But what the cutter does Robin Williams in this movie. Y'all know Robin Williams don'tcha? The guy that played
 Peter Pan or something like that?
 Amen.
 He didn't play Peter Pan, Alberta?

Well

Robin Williams was the cutter. And what his job was is to view the tape _ of all the person's memories _ and to cut out _ the bad stuff _ the undesirable stuff.

How many of us would have such a short movie?

How many of us _ if we knew that in order to get into heaven _ that God would have to show up on the _ movie screen of heaven _ allll the stuff we ever did

You know, probably some folk would get into line like the young lady who came over to the sanctuary and said, "Reverend, I'm gonna go on back home.

I'll just not go to heaven today."

See, every last _ one of y'all

Everybody except me and Brother Woodruff

Got some scenes _ from our life _ that we don't want anybody to know about.

Don't don't get up and move from the person next to you.

Isn't that right?

But the worst scene is gonna be that _ not the things that you did that you didn't really want to do but the worst thing is gonna be _ that you looked at me _ and as messed up as your movie was _ you wanna go talk about my movie.

Now that's what's gonna get you messed up _ is judging my movie.

Trying to put a rating on my life _ when you need to put the rating on your own life.

People looking for that place where they can come to _ where somebody will not judge them.

Folk wanna be accepted. God use ordinary folk.

Now let me tell ya something. If God'll use Rahab

Come on a prostitute now she's not the only one.

And not only did he use her to save his people _ but do you know that Rahab ended up being in the _ ancestral line of Jesus Christ?

Oh look back through Jesus' life.

So there ain't no need for to be ashamed _ of some of the folk _ in your family.

Amen. Jesus had all kind of people _ in his family _ but they were people of _ faith.

Now don't think don't make this sermon make you feel like you can go out of here and do anything you want to do just because you got _ faith.

Amen? Don't go out and just make a movie.

Amen.

Cause you got faith.

But God cares more about your faith _ than he does about your lifestyle.

God cares more about your active faith _ how much faith you have _ in him and what you can do _ than he does about your active lifestyle.

Let me tell you see God can handle your lifestyle.

Yes he can.

That's what he's gonna deliver you from.

He can't handle your faith-less-ness.

You see without faith _ it is impossible _ to please God.

Listen back there.

If you don't know that _ nothing is impossible to God.

That all things are possible _ with God.

Count em Gleason.

I-can-d0-all-things

Through-Christ-who-strengthens-me.

Gleason call that the ten finger rule.

But look.

Here God says _ it is impossible _ to please God _ without faith.

God use plain folk _ who had extraordinary faith _ and faith is extraordinary _ because you got to believe in something that you can't see _ you gotta hope in something that you can't hold in your hand _ you gotta hold on to something that you can't feel what you're holding on to.

But God will bless my extraordinary faith when I believe and I refuse to believe when I don't know a way out when I can't see my way out and there I go instead of me saying that I'm doomed and that it all over I go on to singing I know the Lord will make a way yes he will somehow some way I know the Lord will make a way yes he will he make a way out of no way yes God will bless my extraordinary faith

But you know you better come on and tell the truth in here

You know _ that there are some things in your life _ that you really didn't want to do

There were some places _ that you really didn't want to go

On your way there

"Lord I don't want to go Lord I wish I didn't do

Lord I'm look one more time Lord and I won't go anymore"

And you went one more time and one more time and one more time and one more time and one and you kept on goin over and over and look what God did to ya. He blessed you. Didn't he bless you? He blessed you.

Didn't he bless you? He woke you up. Didn't he wake you up?

I heard a woman say the other day Reverend I sang in the choir _ yeah Sunday morning I went to choir rehearsal Saturday but oh from Thursday to Wednesday I been high on crack cocaine and Reverend I didn't mean to do it but I just can't get this _ monkey _ off my _ back

But I know and then she said but I know the Lord loves me _ and I got Jesus _ and ain't nobody gonna _ take my _ Jesus away from me.

Let me tell ya somethin

Praise!

God use ordinary folk who demonstrate extraordinary faith.

Faith is just trust in God.

You know you can't trust yourself.

How many times have you told, "Self, I'm not gonna do it anymore."

And before the sun go down

How many times have you "Self, I'm not gonna go there anymore."

And then soon as it get dark.

All I'm trying to tell you is stop judging other folk.

Just like God choose you

He can choose me

Just like he choose no-count me

He can choose no-good you

He chose Samson.

I read the beginning of Samson
 The conceiving of Samson
 Samson was born to be a Nazirite
 But if you would look _ at the life of Samson _ it was no wise a life _ that is representative _ of a priestly
 character
 You would think that if Samson _ was the pastor of a church _ they'd kick him out _ on his head, wouldn't they?
 Amen the kind of lifestyle _ that Samson led
 But what I want you to understand is that when you have faith in God _ that faith comes by grace
 Amen and when you got grace _ that gift that's given unto you _ God acts in a miraculous way
 To take away or block out that part of the movie _ that you don't want anybody to know about
 Amen it might be that your movie is seventy years long
 And sixty-nine years are parts that you don't want anybody to know anything about
 But I want you to know that God has enough grace _ to blot out those sixty-nine years.
 Because the Bible says that wherever there is great sin _ there also dwells grace.
 Yeah my God has grace enough to wash away all of your sins.
 Grace I tell ya.
 Yeah grace.
 That God loved me so much _ that he gave an extraordinary son _ to die for a no-good sinner like me _ just so
 the songwriter would be able to write down and sing like we said Wednesday night come on and help me choir.
 What can wash away my sins?

 What can make me whole again?
 Yeah, the hymnologist said "What can wash _ away my sin?"
 And the choir would say "Nothin but the blood of Jesus."
 Yeah he went on to say "What can make me whole again?"
 "Nothin _ but the blood _ of Jesus"
 Ooohh thank you _ for the blood _ the blood that Jesus _ shed for me _ way back yonder _ on Calvary
 I tell you don't y'all ever _ underestimate the power _ of the blood of Jesus
 The power of the blood he used Samson
 Look at Samson's life.
 Yeah that Samson the first thing you hear about Samson that when he born Samson is an ordinary man.
 Yeah, Samson is an ordinary Joe.
 Yes he is.
 And you see one thing that people wanted to find out about Samson is _ where is the secret of your strength?
 They said, "Samson, where does your strength lie?"
 Yeah that let me know that Samson was not big and muscular yeah like a lot of men that he was not some Olympian
 he was not some athletic figure yes he did not have great big muscles that bulge out but Samson was just an
 ordinary little man like me.
 Amen. You see nobody would think that I would be able to pick up a building.
 Nobody would think that I would be able to take a a a a _ take a bone and destroy or kill three thousand men
 So they said Samson, what is the secret of your strength?
 Yeah, you see Samson was an ordinary looking man. He had an ordinary _ frame, but every time that the spirit of
 God would mo-o-ove upon Samson Samson would become strong and powerful
 He was the strongest man in the world.

Yes when the spirit of God moved on Samson in his anger Samson tied three hundred foxes tail to tail and put torches in between each tail and burned up the crops of the Philistines.

When the spirit of the Lord _ came upon ordinary Samson Samson met up against a lion one day and with his bare hands he slayed the lion and left it there dead when the spirit of the lord came upon ordinary Samson Samson met three thousand Philistine men who came to imprison him and Samson reached over and grabbed up the jawbone of an ass and killed all three thousand of em. I tell you Samson was an ordinary man but when the spirit of God came upon him they thought they had Samson trapped one night in a prostitute's house they told her to keep Samson there and they surrounded the prostitute's house but at midnight the spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and Samson got up from the bed and they thought they had Samson but Samson went and took the gateposts of the city and pulled the gates up from their posts and put the gates on his shoulder and ran twenty one miles and set the gates down when _ the spirit of the Lord _ came upon Samson that's what I wanna tell ya.

Ordinary People who let the mighty extraordinary power of the Lord _ come into your life you'll find God using ordinary folk to do _ extra-ordinary things. And you just an ordinary person. God wanna use ordinary folk.

Don't you be nervous.

Don't you be intimidated by anybody.

Don't you know that he who is in me is greater than he who is in the world?

Hold up your head, young lady.

Hold up your head, young man.

You are somebody because you may be plain you may be poor you may be broke but I come to tell you I got a father I got a father ohhhh I got a father yes sir who sits high who looks down low He guide my feet wherever I go. I may not understand but Ohhhh!!! Ohhhh I have a father! Ohhhh I have a father!

God wanna use ordinary plain folk.

Plain folk.

Plain folk. God can use em I tell you.

God took ordinary black me _ who was not able to read the twenty-third psalm _ called him in the corn field _ and told him to go preach my word and they built churches all over America.

God wants to use ordinary folk.

You stop looking at your shortcomings

You stop remembering your shortfalls

You stop naming your faults

Just turn it over to God.

I tell you it don't matter what's in ya, God

Listen, what can wash _ away my fault?

The blood of Jesus.

What can take

Though my sins _ be like scarlet _ though they be red like crimson _ they shall become white _ as snow

I tell you they will because God is able.

Look what God can do I'm going on to my seat _ I want you to know God is able.

Listen somebody said isn't it amazing _ how it is _ that a black cow _ can eat green grass _ and produce white milk

But look what my God did _ took my black soul _ dipped it down in red blood _ and washed

Ohhh he washed

Ohhh he washed
Ohhh he washed

Whiter than snow
Whiter than snow
Ohhhh he

I know you got faults.
Sometimes I'm up.
Sometimes I'm down.
Ahhhh but he washed
Anybody been washed?
A-ny-body been washed?
A-ny-body been washed?
Have ya been?
Ahhhh!!!

We just a plain church
We just a plain old church
Ain't tryin to make a name for ourselves
But I [????]want somebody to know
If they don't call your name
If they don't call my name
If they don't say Corinthian's name
I just want somebody to know the wonderful name of

You can forget my name _ just don't forget the name of

Ohhhh he washed

A mother to the motherless
Jesus
Don't y'all forget about Jesus.
Yeah, Fuzz might not show up _ but I come to tell you if you have an active faith _ Jesus will show up.
Listen, people might not show up _ because they may not like you
You may be too tall
You may be too short
You may be too fat
You may be too skinny
You maybe make them be jealous of you _ but for whatever reason folk can't show up
Ohhhh!!!

[Rev Gleason: The doors of the Church are open.]

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