

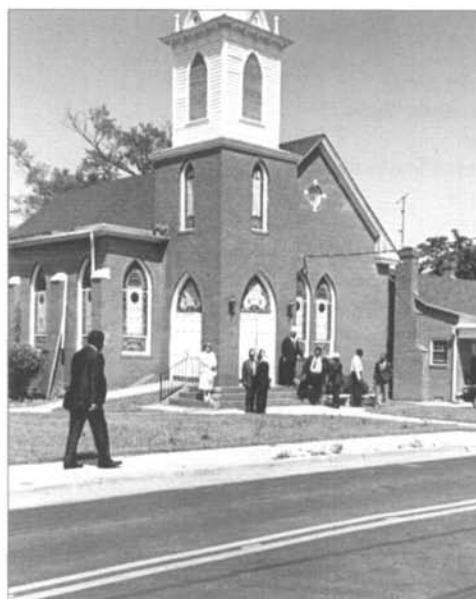
The Black Church in the African American Experience

**C. Eric Lincoln and
Lawrence H. Mamiya**

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To Robert Wood Lynn and
Lawrence Neale Jones

To May, Mae, Ralph, and Rachel

Contents

Preface	xi
1	The Religious Dimension: Toward a Sociology of Black Churches 1
2	The Black Baptists: The First Black Churches in America 20
3	The Black Methodists: The Institutionalization of Black Religious Independence 47
4	The Black Pentecostals: The Spiritual Legacy with a Black Beginning 76
5	In the Receding Shadow of the Plantation: A Profile of Rural Clergy and Churches in the Black Belt 92
6	In the Streets of the Black Metropolis: A Profile of Black Urban Clergy and Churches 115
7	The New Black Revolution: The Black Consciousness Movement and the Black Church 164
8	"Now Is the Time!" The Black Church, Politics, and Civil Rights Militancy 196

9	The American Dream and the American Dilemma: The Black Church and Economics	236
10	The Pulpit and the Pew: The Black Church and Women	274
11	“In My Mother’s House”: The Black Church and Young People	309
12	The Performed Word: Music and the Black Church	346
13	The Black Church and the Twenty-First Century: Challenges to the Black Church	382
	Appendix	405
	Notes	411
	Bibliography	469
	Index	501

List of Tables

Chart 1: Summary of the Black Consciousness Profile	169
Table 1: Years of Education Completed and the Denomination of Rural Clergy	99
Table 2: Occupations of Rural Clergy	100
Table 3: Number by Rural Clergy of Rural and Urban Churches Pastored	101
Table 4: Annual Income of Rural Churches	104
Table 5: Cooperation with Social Agencies or Nonchurch Organizations	109
Table 6: Clergy Income	128
Table 7: Clergy Education	131
Table 8: Black Urban and Rural Clergy Education by Denomination	132-33
Table 9: Nonchurch Occupations of Clergy	134
Table 10: Clergy Benefits	135
Table 11: Pastoral Responsibilities (Urban Clergy Only)	136
Table 12: Type of Building Used for Worship	139
Table 13: Church and Sunday School Membership	141
Table 14: Size of Black Churches	143
Table 15: Annual Church Income	144
Table 16: Church Staff Members	145
Table 17: Internal Organizations and Activities	148
Table 18: Church Facilities for Social and Recreational Activities	149
Table 19: Community Outreach: Cooperation with Social Agencies and Nonchurch Programs	151
Table 20: Use of Church Building by Nonchurch Groups	153
Table 21: Church Participation in Government-Funded Programs	155

Table 22: Interdenominational Cooperation by Black Churches	156
Table 23: Multiple Classification Analysis of the Effect of Age, Denomination, and Education of the Clergy's Black Consciousness (as Measured by the Black Consciousness Scale)	184
Table 24: Percentage of Congregations within Categories of Black Consciousness, Denomination, Size of Congregation, and Location Having Various Community Outreach Programs	186–87
Table 25: Black Churches and Community Outreach Programs	220
Table 26: Civil Rights Militancy and Political Involvement of Black Clergy and Churches	225
Table 27: Church Income	254
Table 28: Methods of Raising Income for the Church	255
Table 29: Church Investments, Businesses, and Income Producing Property	256
Table 30: Ownership and Mortgage Data of Church Buildings	259
Table 31: Women as Pastors by Sex, Age, and Education	290
Table 32: Women as Pastors by Denomination	292–93
Table 33: Outreach Programs for Youth	326
Table 34: Reasons Young People Leave the Church	327
Table 35: Young People Return to Church	328
Table 36: Successful Techniques and Programs for Young People	330
Table 37: Recruitment to the Ministry by Local Church	331
Table 38: Church Music: Number of Choirs in Black Churches	378
Table 39: Church Music: Type of Music Approved for Use in Worship Services	379
Table 40: Clergy Views of the Church's Major Problem	395
Table A.1: Profile of Black Church Sample	406
Table A.2: Estimated Distribution of Black Church Membership in 1989	407

Preface

A good way to understand a people is to study their religion, for religion is addressed to that most sacred schedule of values around which the expression and the meaning of life tends to coalesce. The study of a people's religion is not guaranteed to provide *all* of the answers to what gives a culture its characteristic definitions, of course, for religion is essentially a subjective experience, and an external study or investigation will inevitably miss some of the critical nuances experienced (and valued) only by those on the interior of belief. Nevertheless, a critical observer with an open mind can gain invaluable insight into the structural and motivational cosmos out of which particular behaviors emerge as distinctive earmarks particularizing a given population. Religion, seriously considered, is perhaps the best prism to cultural understanding, not as a comparative index, but as a refractive element through which one social cosmos may look meaningfully at another and adjust its presuppositions accordingly. This study has the advantage of both interior and exterior perspectives both methodologically and experientially.

The prevailing American sentiment has traditionally held that the mainline white churches constitute the only relevant spiritual pulse in the nation, and that whatever is outside this narrow ambit is of little if any significance to the American religious profile. This conventional wisdom is widely reflected in seminary curricula and denominational policies to the end that misperception is compounded, and the religious experience of some 30 to 35 million African Americans is clouded in consequence.

The burden of the conventional views regarding the Black Church and black religion has to do with the uncritical assumption that the black experience in religion is but the replication of the white experience, shadowed by an African patina predisposing it to an inordinate exoticism and emotionalism which distorts to a significant degree the proper expression of the faith. This study is not concerned with the confirmation or the refutation of that point of view. Rather our primary concern is to present as authentic and as objective a profile of

the Black Church and black religion as we found to be possible consistent with contemporary sociological theory and methodology, with the hope that clearer insights might make for a less simplistic understanding. To do this we have examined carefully the history of the Black Church and the findings of other social scientists as a backdrop for our own field study covering the major black communities in the United States.

Our basic premise has been that black religion, whatever its distinctive expressions, is significantly part and parcel of the American experience in religion and that to exclude it arbitrarily from the normative study of religion in America runs the risk of a seriously distorted picture of what American religion is like. After all, seven major black denominations account for more than 80 percent of black religious affiliation in the United States, and that is a sizable segment of the total church population at a time when most white denominations are in decline. Moreover, the remaining 15 to 20 percent of black Christians are scattered among numerous small black sects, the Roman Catholic Church, and the mainline white Protestant denominations. The overwhelming majority of the latter are in predominantly black congregations, despite denominational affiliation with white communions.

But mere numbers aside, the impact of the Black Church on the spiritual, social, economic, educational, and political interests that structure life in America—including the mainline white churches themselves—can scarcely be overlooked in any realistic appraisal of our common religious experience. It is our hope that this study will be a useful instrument of clarification and illumination in church and academe alike for all those Americans of whatever creed or color, who are in search of a more authentic understanding of our religious environment.

However, because there has been such a dearth of serious research on black churches up to very recent times, the Black Church has often experienced difficulty in conceptualizing or knowing itself except as an amorphous, lusterless detail on some larger canvas devoted to other interests. In consequence the Black Church has often found itself repeating history it had already experienced, and relearning lessons it had long since forgotten. Perhaps this offering will help the Black Church establish with finality its true identity, whatever that may be, so that it can get on with the business of history with appropriate self-confidence and direction. That is certainly a principal motivation for this undertaking.

There are probably few studies of such limited scope which have embraced the contributions, direct and vicarious of so many scholars, researchers, and clerical professionals. We can list but some of them here, but our gratitude to all those who helped in this endeavor, whether or not their names appear here, is real, heartfelt, and complete. Our very first vote of thanks must be reserved for the hundreds of black pastors who received us in their churches, opened their hearts and their records to us, and gave generously of their time, their wisdom, and their experiences to lend viability and authenticity to our efforts to profile the Black Church—their church. Without their help, this book could never have come into existence, and could scarcely have been justified in conception.

We next pay tribute to the teams of seminarians, graduate students, clerical trainees, and others who blanketed the field from New York City to Los Angeles, and from Detroit to the rural counties of Florida and Mississippi to interview church personnel, and to carefully record the data of their response. For this our warmest thanks and appreciation is extended to the regional and local coordinators of the survey: Charles A. Brown, coordinator, Birmingham, Alabama; Dr. Lillian Ashcraft Easton (Clark Atlanta University), regional coordinator for St. Louis, Kansas City, Missouri, and the Midwest and national researcher; Rev. Dr. David Hurst (pastor, Los Angeles), coordinator, southern California; Rev. Samuel A. Lockhart, national researcher, southern urban areas; Rev. Dr. Larry Murphy (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary), coordinator, Chicago area; Rev. Dr. James Shopshire (Interdenominational Theological Center), regional coordinator, Atlanta area and southern rural black churches; and Rev. Dr. Archie Smith (Pacific School of Religion), regional coordinator, San Francisco-Oakland Bay area.

Field-workers under the direction of the coordinators included Marlene Bailey, M. Kathy Brown, Rose Brown, John A. Cade, David E. Cann, Vernon Carroway, Dr. J. King Chandler III, Tim Cyrus, Warren L. Dennis, Kofi Dumfour, Earl Dunstan, Arnette Edelmann, Cynthia Faison, D. A. Gaines, Arlene Hambrick, Wilma Joyce Irvin-Grooms, Richard Johnson, Jr., Evans Kote-Nikoi, Michelle Lanchester, Bernard Mayhew, Jr., Sabrina Miles, Ralph J. Miller, Nathaniel Milton, Otis I. Mitchell, Vincent F. Mitchell, Cynthia Moore, Mae C. Morrow, Tracy Poole, Frank Portee III, Ronald E. Ramsey, Fred Smith, Sherman Tribble, Erwin D. Ward, Jerry Welch, and Jeanne Wilkerson. Inevitably, the names of many more field-workers are no longer available after so many years since their involvement. Nevertheless,

for those named and those anonymous, we are grateful for their contributions, and we hope that the summers they sacrificed in this effort will find some reward in seeing the results of their work in print.

Simultaneous with the collection of field data, our research was strengthened immeasurably by the consultation and advice of a distinguished cadre of men and women from church and academe whose expertise in a wide spectrum of religious interests helped to gauge, direct, and confirm our investigation. We take this occasion to record our thanks to the following consultants for their understanding, cooperation, and advice: Bishop John H. Adams (A.M.E. Church); Bishop Moses Anderson (Roman Catholic Church); Dr. Lewis V. Baldwin (Vanderbilt University); Dr. Delores Carpenter (Howard University School of Divinity); Bishop James L. Cummings (C.M.E. Church); Rev. F. Benjamin Davis (NBC America); Bishop J. H. Dell (COGIC); Mr. Richard Dozier (Black Church architect); Bishop Alfred G. Dunstan (A.M.E. Zion Church); Bishop John Exum (C.M.E. Church); Bishop J. Clinton Hoggard (A.M.E. Zion Church); Dr. Lawrence Neale Jones (dean, Howard University School of Divinity); Rev. William A. Jones (PNBC); Rev. Thomas Kilgore, Jr. (PNBC); Rev. George W. Lucas (NBC); Dr. William B. McClain (Wesley Theological Seminary); Bishop S. S. Morris, Jr. (A.M.E. Church); Dr. Mance Jackson (C.M.E. Church in Georgia and the Interdenominational Theological Center); Dr. Larry Murphy (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary); Dr. Douglas Nelson (Black Church historian); Dr. Clarence G. Newsome (assistant dean, Howard University School of Divinity); Mr. Richard Poulucci (computer consultant, Vassar College); Dr. Alton Pollard (Wake Forest University); Dr. Harry Richardson (president emeritus, Interdenominational Theological Center); Dr. Grant Schockley (former president of the Interdenominational Theological Center); Bishop German Ross (COGIC); Dr. John Satterwhite (editor, A.M.E. Zion Review); Rev. Manuel L. Scott (NBC, U.S.A., Inc.); Dr. James Costens and Dr. David Shannon (president and vice president of the Interdenominational Theological Center, respectively); Dr. James Shopshire (Wesley Theological Seminary); Dr. Jon Spencer (Duke University); Dr. James B. Stewart (Pennsylvania State University); Dr. Sonja Stone (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); Dr. Harold Dean Trulear (Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary); Dr. James Washington (Union Theological Seminary); Professor Leon Watts (Yale University Divinity School); and Dr. Kenny Williams (Duke Univer-

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For manuscript preparation and for critical management of field assignments, research assistance, retrieval of data, payroll preparation, and a hundred other details vital to the progress of the study, we owe an incalculable debt to Dolores J. Morehead and Wanda Camp at Duke University, and to Marlene Bailey and Lenore Cypress-Ferrill at Vassar College. Mrs. Faye Stickles of Vassar provided expert key-punching for computer cards as a back-up system.

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If this work has any merit, all those whose contributions we have cited have a share in it. Its deficiencies are our own and ours alone.

1 The Religious Dimension: Toward a Sociology of Black Churches

In this book we have attempted to provide a wide-ranging study of the churches and clergy that comprise the seven major historic black denominations: the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church; the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). We use the term "the Black Church" as do other scholars and much of the general public as a kind of sociological and theological shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States. Since the late 1960s "the Black Church" has replaced the older reference, "the Negro Church," which was used by scholars of a previous generation.¹ In general usage any black Christian person is included in "the Black Church" if he or she is a member of a black congregation. In this study, however, while we recognized that there are predominantly black local churches in white denominations such as the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, among others, we chose to limit our operational definition of "the Black Church" to those independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of black Christians.² Today the seven major black denominations with a scattering of smaller communions make up the body of the Black Church and it is estimated that more than 80 percent of all black Christians are in these seven denominations, with the smaller communions accounting for an additional 6 percent.³ Historical overviews of these seven major black denominations are provided in the chapters on the Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal communions.

Although the main intent of this study is one of social description, providing historical overviews as well as statistical data and analy-

2 The Religious Dimension

ses, we want to make clear in this chapter what our underlying assumptions are in regard to the study of black churches. Thus far, a general theory for the social analysis of black religious phenomena and a sociology of black churches has not yet appeared,⁴ but we want to contribute the following theoretical assumptions to the scholarly dialogue: (1), the religious dimension: the black sacred cosmos; (2), the Black Church as the central institutional sector and partial differentiation; and (3), the dialectical model of the Black Church.

1 The Religious Dimension: The Black Sacred Cosmos

In any attempt to gather statistics and other data about black religious phenomena, it is easy to forget about the experiential dimension which gave rise to the set of social institutions called "churches." Religion, or the religious dimension consists of the encounter of human beings with the "sacred" or "divine." Rudolf Otto has given a classical description of this encounter with the sacred as eliciting feelings of "*mysterium, tremendum, et fascinans*" (the mysterious, terrifying, and fascinating).⁵ While Otto's phenomenological description of the awesomeness and attractiveness of the sacred is useful as a generalized and universal description of the religious dimension, attention must also be given to the particular cultural and historical configuration in which that experience takes place. This investigation is addressed to the religious worldview of African Americans, which we have called the "black sacred cosmos."⁶ Above all, religion is, as Durkheim has made clear, a social phenomenon, a shared group experience that has shaped and influenced the cultural screens of human communication and interpretation.⁷

The black sacred cosmos or the religious worldview of African Americans is related both to their African heritage, which envisaged the whole universe as sacred, and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath. It has been only in the past twenty years that scholars of African American history, culture, and religion have begun to recognize that black people created their own unique and distinctive forms of culture and worldviews as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guests.⁸ As slaves on the farms and plantations, then as domestic servants in white households, black people were privy to some of the most intimate aspects of white life and culture, from worship to

sexual behavior; but very few whites knew anything about black people or their culture, or cared to. In fact, some scholars have viewed aspects of black cultural creations as aberrational attempts to mimic mainstream white culture.⁹ Other scholars have claimed that, "The Negro is only an American and nothing else. He has no values and culture to guard and protect."¹⁰ Such arguments seem unwilling to grant to African Americans the minimum presuppositions all other hyphenated Americans are permitted to take for granted, which is to say that their origins were elsewhere, and that coming from elsewhere, if they have a viable history, they must also have an effective culture. That a large gulf separated the black world from the expectations of the white is undeniable, but hardly inexplicable. Culture is the sum of the options for creative survival. Two hundred and fifty years of slavery were followed by one hundred years of official and unofficial segregation in the South and the North. Even today the gulf still persists, bolstered in large measure by racial segregation in the place of residence, education, religion, and social life.¹¹ However, the more limited the options for approved participation in the cultural mainstream, the more refined and satisfying become the alternatives to those excluded from the approved norms.

Depending upon the culture and history of a particular African-related religious tradition, different sacred object(s) or figure(s) will be at the center of the black sacred cosmos. For the more African-based syncretic religions of the Caribbean and Latin America like the Voudou of Haiti, the Obeia of Jamaica, the Santeria of Cuba, and the Candomble and Umbanda of Brazil, African deities and spiritual forces played a more prominent role in the rituals and worship of the people.¹² For African American Christianity, the Christian God ultimately revealed in Jesus of Nazareth dominated the black sacred cosmos. While the structure of beliefs for black Christians were the same orthodox beliefs as that of white Christians, there were also different degrees of emphasis and valences given to certain particular theological views. For example, the Old Testament notion of God as an avenging, conquering, liberating paladin remains a formidable anchor of the faith in most black churches. The older the church or the more elderly its congregation, the more likely the demand for the exciting imagery and the personal involvement of God in history is likely to be. The direct relationship between the holocaust of slavery and the notion of divine rescue colored the theological perceptions of black laity and the themes of black preaching in a very decisive manner, particularly in those churches closest to the experience.

Nonetheless, as Henry Mitchell, James Cone, and Gayraud Wilmore have all agreed, throughout black religious history the reality of Jesus as the Son of God made flesh finds a deep response in black faith and worship. The experience of oppression is more likely to find immediate resonance with the incarnational view of the suffering, humiliation, death, and eventual triumph of Jesus in the resurrection than with an abstract concept of an impersonal God.¹³ Another example of this difference in emphasis concerned the greater weight given to the biblical views of the importance of human personality and human equality implicit in "children of God."¹⁴ The trauma of being officially defined by the U.S. Constitution as "three-fifths" human, and treated in terms of that understanding, the struggle of the African American people to affirm and establish their humanity and their worth as persons has a long history. The black Christians who formed the historic black churches also knew implicitly that their understanding of Christianity, which was premised on the rock of antiracial discrimination, was more authentic than the Christianity practiced in white churches.

A major aspect of black Christian belief is found in the symbolic importance given to the word "freedom." Throughout black history the term "freedom" has found a deep religious resonance in the lives and hopes of African Americans. Depending upon the time and the context, the implications of freedom were derived from the nature of the exigency. During slavery it meant release from bondage; after emancipation it meant the right to be educated, to be employed, and to move about freely from place to place. In the twentieth century freedom means social, political, and economic justice. From the very beginning of the black experience in America, one critical denotation of freedom has remained constant: freedom has always meant the absence of any restraint which might compromise one's responsibility to God. The notion has persisted that if God calls you to discipleship, God calls you to freedom. And that God wants you free because God made you for Himself and in His image. Although generations of white preachers and exhorters developed an amazing complex of arguments aimed at avoiding so obvious a conclusion, it was a dictum securely anchored in the black man's faith and indelibly engraved on his psyche. A well-known black spiritual affirms that:

Before I'll be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Father
and be free. . . .

Implicit is the notion that unfreedom puts at risk the promise of salvation. No person can serve two masters, and freedom as a condition of spiritual readiness was no less critical to the religious strategies of Martin Luther King, Jr., than to those of Richard Allen, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, and Fannie Lou Hamer. Each person developed a *modus vivendi* consistent with their times and the resources at hand. Their objectives were the same: freedom to be as God had intended all men and women to be. Free to belong to God.

For whites freedom has bolstered the value of American individualism: to be free to pursue one's destiny without political or bureaucratic interference or restraint. But for African Americans freedom has always been communal in nature. In Africa the destiny of the individual was linked to that of the tribe or the community in an intensely interconnected security system. In America, black people have seldom been perceived or treated as individuals; they have usually been dealt with as "representatives" of their "race," an external projection. Hence, the communal sense of freedom has an internal African rootage curiously reinforced by hostile social convention imposed from outside on all African Americans as a caste. But Dr. Martin Luther King's jubilant cry of, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last," echoed the understanding black folk always had with the Almighty God whose impatience with unfreedom matched their own.¹⁵ In song, word, and deed, freedom has always been the superlative value of the black sacred cosmos. The message of the Invisible Church was, however articulated, *God wants you free!*

In describing the key religious elements of the black churches he visited in the South, W. E. B. Du Bois was particularly impressed with "the preacher, the music, and the frenzy."¹⁶ In later chapters we will examine more closely the situation of the black preacher and the development of music in black churches. For this examination of the black sacred cosmos, a deciphering of the frenzy is particularly important. Like most observers and visitors to black worship services, Du Bois was referring to the intense enthusiasm and the open display of emotions and feelings exhibited by the worshipers. Some worshipers "got the Spirit" and were propelled into a paroxysm of shouting. While others "fell out" and rolled on the floor in a shaking, trance-like state, possessed by the Holy Ghost. Some people stood up in the pews and waved their hands over their heads, while others clapped their hands in time with the music. Even in the midst of preaching, the worshipers carried on a dialogue with the preacher by

shouting approval and agreement with ejaculations like "Amen!" or "Preach it!" or "Tell it like it is!" At other times they encouraged the preacher to work harder to reach that precipitating point of cathartic climax by calling out, "Well?" . . . "Well?" The highlight of the service was to worship and glorify God by achieving the experience of mass catharsis; a purifying explosion of emotions that eclipses the harshness of reality for a season and leaves both the preacher and the congregation drained in a moment of spiritual ecstasy. Failure to achieve this experience often resulted in polite compliments of "good talk" or "good lecture," and not the ultimate, "You *preached* today!" being offered the preacher. The Black Church was the first theater in the black community. Like the Greek theater its functional goal was catharsis, but beyond the Greeks, the Black Church was in search of transcendence, not a mere emptying of the emotions, but an enduring fellowship with God in which the formal worship service provided the occasion for particular periods of intimacy.

Above all, the core experience of the black sacred cosmos was the personal conversion of the individual believer. The Christianity that was spread among slaves during the First and Second Awakenings was an evangelical Christianity that stressed personal conversion through a deep regenerating experience, being "born again." The spiritual journey began with an acknowledgment of personal sinfulness and unworthiness and ended in an emotional experience of salvation by God through the Holy Spirit. The rebirth meant a change, a fundamental reorientation in the approach to life. While white Christians also stressed personal conversion, the historical and narrative evidence indicate that the black conversion and visionary experience was of a qualitatively different level. As Mechal Sobel has argued in her analysis of the black Baptist's cosmos, "black religious experiences began to be singled out as particularly ecstatic by white Baptists, signifying consciousness of a difference."¹⁷ As time passed the black-white difference intensified. "Analysis of the black visionary experiences indicate," wrote Sobel, "that they were very different from the outset, and that their uniqueness was highlighted as the whites grew less concerned with spiritual journeys."¹⁸

We can also extend Sobel's argument about the forging of a new cosmos from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries that "united African and Baptist elements in a new whole."¹⁹ What was really created was a black sacred cosmos that cut across denominational lines—largely Baptist and Methodist at first, but also Roman

Catholic, Pentecostal, and others in later years. Wherever black people were gathered in significant enough numbers, the distinct quality of a shared Afro-Christian religious worldview and faith was felt. Even in predominantly white denominations with a million or more black members like the United Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church, the surges and eruptions of the black sacred cosmos were constant and influential.²⁰ A qualitatively different cultural form of expressing Christianity is found in most black churches, regardless of denomination, to this day.

Culture is the form of religion and religion is the heart of culture. Paul Tillich's insight about the relationship between religion and culture is important in a discussion of the black sacred cosmos.²¹ Religion is expressed in cultural forms like music and song, styles and content of preaching, and modes of worship, to give a few examples. But religion is also the heart of culture because it raises the core values of that culture to ultimate levels and legitimates them.²² The relationship between the black sacred cosmos and black culture in general is similar. The core values of black culture like freedom, justice, equality, an African heritage, and racial parity at all levels of human intercourse, are raised to ultimate levels and legitimated by the black sacred cosmos. Although this cosmos is largely Afro-Christian in nature due to its religious history, it has also erupted in other black militant, nationalistic, and non-Christian movements.²³ The close relationship between the black sacred cosmos and black culture has often been missed by social analysts who impose sacred/secular distinctions too easily upon the phenomena of black culture.²⁴ What is often overlooked is the fact that many aspects of black cultural practices and some major social institutions had religious origins; they were given birth and nurtured in the womb of the Black Church.

2 The Black Church as the Central Institutional Sector and Partial Differentiation

The assumption that black churches constituted the central institutional sector in black communities is common in the American understanding of the black subculture. Reliable investigators have consistently underscored the fact that black churches were one of the few stable and coherent institutions to emerge from slavery.²⁵ Slaves

not only worshiped with their masters or under the conditions of their masters' control, they also held their own secret, independent worship services in the backwoods and bayous of plantations, and sometimes in their own slave quarters: a phenomenon which Frazier called the "invisible institution."²⁶ Among quasi-free blacks, mutual aid societies and churches were among the first institutions created by black people. For example, the Free African Society, a mutual aid society founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in 1787, gave birth to Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1794. During the ante-bellum period of Reconstruction the pattern for their central and dominant institutional role was set when churches became the centers of the numerous black communities in the South that were formed as former slaves were separated from the plantation base to which they previously belonged. Du Bois has called the building of these black churches the "first form of economic cooperation" among black people.²⁷ Even in northern urban black communities the early historic black churches like Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, Mother Zion and Abyssinian Baptist in New York City, and First African in Boston also became the central institutions of those communities.²⁸

The Black Church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development. E. Franklin Frazier's apt descriptive phrase, "nation within a nation," pointed to these multifarious levels of community involvement found in the Black Church, in addition to the traditional concerns of worship, moral nurture, education, and social control. Much of black culture is heavily indebted to the black religious tradition, including most forms of black music, drama, literature, storytelling, and even humor. The first black publisher was the A.M.E. Church which, with the A.M.E. Zion Church, pushed the black experience into its first national organizations.

Among blacks the process of differentiation began in the late nineteenth century and it was accelerated by the urban migrations of the twentieth century after World War I through the 1960s. Differentiation took several forms: class differentiation, the development of secular institutions, and the rise of competing black religious groups. Although there were class distinctions forming during the period of

slavery between freed men and slaves, and gradations among slaves according to the type of labor they performed and skin color, the process of class formation was largely a twentieth-century phenomenon, developing a black middle class from a largely rural proletariat. In 1890 about 90 percent of the black population resided in the South, and more than 80 percent of them lived in the rural "black belt" counties. The vast majority of this rural population were either farmers, sharecroppers or tenants, and unskilled workers. One hundred years later, close to one-third of the black population has achieved middle-class status and more than 80 percent of the black population live in urban areas. African Americans now constitute one of the most highly urbanized populations. A more detailed description of the development of class stratification and the rise of competing black religious groups is given in chapters 6 and 9.

The twentieth century also saw the development of black secular organizations like the black college fraternities and sororities starting in 1907, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, and the National Urban League in 1911. Independent black newspapers, which began in the early nineteenth century, also multiplied in urban areas during the twentieth century. The important fact about the development of these secular institutions such as the NAACP or National Urban League is that they were often founded with the help and support of Black Church leaders; their memberships also often overlapped with Black Church membership. Some of the more astute and visionary church leaders saw the need to develop secular vehicles in order to cope with more complex and pluralistic urban environments. In other words, a partial differentiation of these institutions, spheres, and functions occurred, which did not require a complete separation from the Black Church. These black secular organizations also allowed clergy and church members to influence the institutions and political processes of the larger society without raising questions about the constitutional separation between church and state. There is often an interplay, an interaction between black churches and these secular institutions, particularly in the spheres of education, politics, and economics. In fact, there is often more cooperation than conflict between black churches and secular organizations as we will show in later chapters. Most social scientific views of religion in modern society assume a posture of complete differentiation, where the spheres of the polity and the economy are completely separated from

religion, do not intersect, and have very little interaction. Religion in modern society becomes privatized.²⁹ Our contention is that such a view of complete differentiation when applied to the Black Church confuses the historical uniqueness of that institution, and leads to a misinterpretation of the data and to a misunderstanding of black churches and black culture.

The view of partial differentiation also emphasizes the fact that the black religious tradition forms a central part of the black cultural heritage and continues a dynamic interaction with the secular forms of black culture. The interplay is seen most clearly in the area of black music, where so many black musicians and singers received their initial training and first chance for a public performance in their churches. While some of them went off to play and sing the "devil's music" like the blues and jazz in nightclubs, these secular cultural traditions gradually affected Black Church music. For example, the rhythm and blues genre was transformed into urban Negro gospel music by Thomas A. Dorsey, son of a country preacher, and a bluesman.³⁰ Jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington and Mary Lou Williams composed sacred music and masses for use in worship settings. Another example of partial differentiation and interaction is found in the area of education. As we will show later, some of the nation's best black colleges, like Morehouse and Spelman, were started in the basements of black churches. Like their famous counterparts, Fisk and Howard universities, they were also the training grounds for the religious professions, such as the ministry in the case of Morehouse and for missionaries and teachers at Spelman. Their early curricula were steeped in the maxims of moral education. Although the schools became secularized in the twentieth century, Morehouse College still produced outstanding religious leaders such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who profoundly affected the directions of Black Church history. Where the black cultural heritage was vibrant and alive, so was the black religious tradition. Much of black culture was forged in the heart of black religion and the Black Church. A demise of the black religious tradition would have profound implications for the preservation of black culture.

3 The Dialectical Model of the Black Church

In their important work, *Black Church in the Sixties*, Hart Nelsen and Anne Kusener Nelsen have identified three different types of

interpretive schemes or social scientific models found in the work of past researchers of the Black Church, which we have summarized as follows:³¹

1. The Assimilation Model—The essence of this view is the belief in the necessity of the demise of the Black Church for the public good of blacks. The Black Church is seen as a stumbling block to assimilation in the American mainstream. The assimilation model also views the Black Church as anti-intellectual and authoritarian. This model is found in the views and studies of E. Franklin Frazier.³²

2. The Isolation Model—The Black Church is characterized by “involuntary isolation” which is due to predominantly lower-class statuses in the black community. Isolation from civic affairs and mass apathy are the results of racial segregation in ghettos. Thus, black religion is viewed as being primarily lower class and other-worldly. The isolation model is found in the work of Anthony Orum and Charles Silberman.³³

3. The Compensatory Model—The Black Church’s main attraction is to give large masses of people the opportunity for power, control, applause, and acclaim within the group which they do not receive in the larger society, as St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton asserted in *Black Metropolis*. This view is also related to Gunnar Myrdal’s perspective in *An American Dilemma* that the black community is essentially pathological and black culture is a “distorted development” of general American culture, so black people compensate for this lack of acclaim and for lack of access to mainstream society in their own institutions.³⁴

4. The Nelsens’ fourth alternative (developed by themselves) is the “ethnic community-prophetic” model which gives a more positive interpretation of the Black Church. This model emphasizes the significance of the Black Church “as a base for building a sense of ethnic identity and a community of interest among its members.” It also accentuates the potential of the Black Church or its minister as “prophet to a corrupt white Christian nation.”³⁵

Our own view of the Black Church, which is closer to the Nelsens’ model, may be called the “dialectical model” of the Black Church. Black churches are institutions that are involved in a constant series of dialectical tensions. The dialectic holds polar opposites in tension, constantly shifting between the polarities in historical time. There is no Hegelian synthesis or ultimate resolution of the dialectic. Although this dialectical model is not completely new, we feel that it is time to reassert the dialectical tensions in order to obtain a holistic

picture of black churches. The task of the social analyst is to examine the social conditions of any particular black church, including the situation of its leadership and membership, in order to determine what its major orientation is in relation to any pair of dialectical polarities. There are six main pairs of dialectically related polar opposites, which are discussed below.³⁶

The dialectic between priestly and prophetic functions. Every black church is involved with both functions. Priestly functions involve only those activities concerned with worship and maintaining the spiritual life of members; church maintenance activities are the major thrust. Prophetic functions refer to involvement in political concerns and activities in the wider community; classically, prophetic activity has meant pronouncing a radical word of God's judgment. Some churches are closer to one end than to the other. Priestly churches are bastions of survival and prophetic churches are networks of liberation. But both types of churches also illustrate both functions, which means that liberation churches also perform the priestly functions and priestly churches contain liberation potential. Much of the discussion of black liberation theology has tended to neglect the priestly element within black churches.

The dialectic between other-worldly versus this-worldly. While the previous dialectic referred to functions, other-worldly versus this-worldly project the orientation that believers have toward the world. "Other-worldly" means being concerned only with heaven and eternal life or the world beyond, a pie-in-the-sky attitude that neglects political and social concerns. "This-worldly" refers to involvement in the affairs of this world, especially politics and social life, in the here and now. Past studies have overemphasized the other-worldly views of black churches. The other-worldly aspect, the transcendence of social and political conditions, can have a this-worldly political correlate which returns to this world by providing an ethical and prophetic critique of the present social order. In some instances eschatological transcendence can help to critique the present. One example of this is found in the mysticism of Nat Turner, whose eschatological visions directed him to attempt a strategy of violence to overturn the system of slavery.³⁷

The dialectic between universalism and particularism. As ethnic institutions the historic black churches reflected the dialectical tension between the universalism of the Christian message and the particularism of their past racial history as institutions emerging out

of the racism of white Christianity and the larger society. While all of the historic black churches have maintained a universal openness to all races and proudly asserted a strong antiracial discrimination position, they have differed and varied in their views and support of particularistic racial views, especially in regard to black consciousness. After the watershed period of the civil rights movement and the rise of black consciousness, it is important to understand the dialectical tensions which exist in every black religious group in matters regarding the racial factor. Race has played a very important role in the lives of black people and in the history of black institutions. Assessments of the racial factor, both positive and negative, ought not be avoided. For example, when confronted by the radical and particularistic demands of a phenomenon like black liberation theology, many white Christians, including theologians, have quickly hoisted the flag of a universal Christendom, as "brothers and sisters in Christ," while trying to escape responsibility for the contemporary pain and suffering inflicted upon black people. Similarly, some black Christians, including pastors, have felt uncomfortable in dealing with their racial past and present, and would prefer to assert the universalism of the gospel as an alternative to confronting the nettlesome problems of Christian racialism.

The dialectic between the communal and the privatistic. The communal orientation refers to the historic tradition of black churches being involved in all aspects of the lives of their members, including political, economic, educational, and social concerns. The privatistic pole of this dialectic means a withdrawal from the concerns of the larger community to a focus on meeting only the religious needs of its adherents. This dialectic is useful in assessing the degree to which the process of secularization has affected black churches. In sociological theory the effects of secularization are to push toward privatism, a more personal and individualistic sense of religiousness. Secularization also results in a psychologizing of religion, a focus on personal counseling and producing a sense of individual well-being.

The dialectic between charismatic versus bureaucratic. Max Weber's typology of organizational forms is useful in analyzing the organizational style of any black church or denomination. As an overall generalization, the majority of black churches and denominations tend to lean toward the charismatic pole of the continuum, especially when compared to white mainstream denominations and

churches which tend to have more bureaucratic forms. This charismatic tendency is seen in the great difficulty which most of the historic black denominations have encountered in trying to establish a centralized national headquarters for their denominations. Among the seven black denominations, only the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of God in Christ have been able to establish national headquarters, both in Memphis. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., established a national headquarters in Nashville in 1989. The charismatic tendency is also seen in the lower priority given by black churches and clergy to bureaucratic organizational forms like keeping accurate membership and financial records. From their beginnings in the "invisible institution" of slave religion, African Americans have invested far more authority in the charismatic personality of the preacher than in any organizational forms of bureaucratic hierarchy. The origins of this charismatic emphasis stemmed from the oral traditions of African cultures and religions, where people with the best speaking abilities were viewed as divinely gifted, and in the United States from the prohibition against teaching slaves to read and write, which resulted in a greater stress upon the development of an oral tradition in African American culture.³⁸ The charisma of church leaders was demonstrated both in the appeal of their personalities and especially in their ability to preach and elicit a strong cathartic response. Rising educational levels and upward mobility among black people have not diminished the appeal of charisma in black churches. While middle-class black churches have been more careful in keeping better records and in adopting more efficient organizational forms, their pastors must not only possess the proper educational credentials but also a charismatic preaching ability. The nickname of a famous black preacher, Rev. Dr. Charles Adams of the Hartford Avenue Baptist Church in Detroit who is called the "Harvard whooper," is an illustration of this ideal. Dr. Adams is widely celebrated as an educated preacher who can still preach in the traditional black style. The "organization man and woman," those who embody the bureaucratic style, are seldom found among the pastors of the leading black churches in the United States.

The dialectic between resistance versus accommodation. The crucial axis of black history, according to Manning Marable, has consisted of two decisive political options, that of resistance versus accommodation.³⁹ Every black person and every black institution has participated in making compromises between these two poles.

The pole of accommodation means to be influenced by the larger society and to take part in aspects of it, however marginal that participation may be. In their accommodative role, black churches have been one of the major cultural brokers of the norms, values, and expectations of white society. Black churches are viewed as "mediating institutions."⁴⁰ For example, after the Civil War the church was the main mediating and socializing vehicle for millions of former slaves, teaching them economic rationality, urging them to get an education, helping them to keep their families together, and providing the leadership for early black communities. Sometimes accommodation also meant that black preachers were manipulated and used by whites. But the pole of resistance meant that it was possible to resist the accommodative forces and pressures of the American mainstream. Resistance meant affirming one's own cultural heritage, in this case an African American or black heritage. As one of the few totally black controlled and independent institutions, black churches played a major role in resistance. Politically, resistance has included both self-determination and self-affirmation. Since the civil rights movement and the attempts to desegregate American society, the accommodative pressures on black people and black institutions have grown considerably. One of the major roles of black churches in the future will be as historic reservoirs of black culture and as examples of resistance and independence.⁴¹

These six pairs of dialectical polarities give a more comprehensive view of the complexity of black churches as social institutions, including their roles and functions in black communities.⁴² The strength of the dialectical model of the Black Church is that it leads to a more dynamic view of black churches along a continuum of dialectical tensions, struggle, and change. The problem of single, nondialectical typological views of black churches is that they tend to categorize and stereotype black churches into rigid pigeonhole categories like "other-worldly"; they miss the historical dynamism of institutions moving back and forth in response to certain issues or social conditions. Besides allowing for institutional change, the dialectical model of the Black Church offers methodological flexibility. For example, six major polar dimensions have been mentioned above, but other polarities could be added to the model such as the dialectical polarities involved in sexual politics (male-female), or those of liberation theology (oppressor-oppressed). Whatever polarities are used, the most important aspect of the model is to stress the dialectical tensions and constant interactions.

The dialectical model of the Black Church is helpful in explaining the pluralism and the plurality of views that exist in black churches and black communities. For example, in regard to politics the dialectical model of the Black Church is helpful in understanding Gayraud Wilmore's statement that black churches have been "the most conservative" and "the most radical" institutions at the same time.⁴³ It also helps to clarify Manning Marable's political assessment of what he has called the "ambiguous Black Church."⁴⁴ Unless one understands that black churches are involved in a dynamic series of dialectical tensions, a serious misunderstanding of these institutions can occur because the usual tendency is to collapse the dialectic and assert one side of the polarity, which often results in a simplistic view. The models of black churches that were summarized earlier share the danger of oversimplification when certain insights about black churches are made the major defining categories.

The dialectical model allows for a more objective analysis of black churches as social institutions because it takes a broader, more comprehensive perspective. It moves beyond the simplistic positive or negative assessments of personal observation and places black churches along a dynamic continuum allowing for change in response to changing social conditions.

The dialectical model of the Black Church is reflective of W. E. B. Du Bois's phenomenology of consciousness, his poetic articulation of "double-consciousness" as summarizing both the plight and potential of the African and Euro-American heritage of black people; "two struggling souls within one dark body."⁴⁵ Du Bois did not provide any final resolution of this double-consciousness, but he did recognize the need for complete freedom for African Americans in order that their human potentials could be fully realized. The Black Church institutionalizes the dialectical tensions and constant struggles that Du Bois wrote about. The black churches are not reified social institutions, but they represent the collective double-consciousness of the African American subculture expressing itself as a religious community in the uncertain shadow of an established tradition.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The purpose of this brief introductory chapter has been to make clear the main theoretical assumptions that underlie our interpretation and analysis of black churches. Although the major intent of our

study was to provide descriptive historical overviews and contemporary statistical data and information about black churches and clergy in the seven historic black denominations, we felt that an elaboration of these theoretical assumptions would contribute to the ongoing scholarly dialogue about ways of interpreting black religious phenomena, especially the Black Church.

The religious dimension of black churches is found in the black sacred cosmos, a unique Afro-Christian worldview that was forged among black people from both the African and Euro-American traditions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The black sacred cosmos permeated all of the social institutions and cultural traditions of black people. While the general structure of beliefs, rituals, and organization of black churches remained the same as white churches, black Christians often gave different nuances and emphases to their theological views. For example, the paladin God of deliverance is given a much more prominent role in black worship practices. Black worship and religious experiences are also much more ecstatic, emotionally expressive, and enthusiastic compared to whites. The black sacred cosmos also reflects the deepest values of African Americans, giving primal consideration to the necessity of freedom as an expression of complete belonging and allegiance to God.

As the only stable and coherent institutional area to emerge from slavery, black churches were not only dominant in their communities but they also became the womb of black culture and a number of major social institutions. While the social processes of migration, urbanization, and differentiation have diminished aspects of this centrality and dominance, black churches have continued their interactions within the spheres of politics, economics, education, and culture so that only a partial differentiation has occurred and not a complete separation. Examples of this partial differentiation will be given in later chapters.

The "dialectical model of the Black Church," which conceives of black churches along a continuum of six major dialectical polarities held in dynamic tension, has been our way of obtaining a more comprehensive view of this significant institutional sector. Many past studies of black churches have been flawed by using a single rigid typological label like "other-worldly" or "compensatory" to characterize all black churches. While these typologies may contain aspects of truth, they fail to present the whole picture. Furthermore, they also tend to become ahistorical with the passage of time.

The complexities of black churches as social institutions require a more dynamic and interactional theoretical perspective because they have played more complex roles and assumed more comprehensive burdens in their communities than is true of most white and ethnic churches. Hence, the theoretical assumptions cited above are only the first steps in the quest for a more comprehensive theory of black religious phenomena and a sociology of black churches.

In chapters 2, 3, and 4 we present overviews of the seven historic black denominations, denoting their organizational forms, and the main aspects of their history. Unfortunately, a listing of all of the people who contributed to the historical development of a particular denomination is impossible in a brief overview, and readers are referred to the in-house histories published by the denominations themselves.

In chapters 5 and 6 we present summary profiles of black rural and urban churches and clergy for our field survey of black churches nationwide. We have attempted to place our results in historical perspective, using comparisons with past studies wherever possible.

Chapter 7 consists of an examination of the impact of the black consciousness period of black power and black pride upon black churches and clergy. These findings represent the first attempt to examine this phenomenon by any survey study. A black consciousness scale was constructed from the survey questions and used to examine the degree of black consciousness expressed by black clergy, and the relationship between black consciousness and the sponsorship of community outreach programs by black churches.

In chapters 8 and 9 we present both historical summaries and contemporary data regarding the relationship of black churches to the areas of politics and economics. The arguments of partial differentiation and the dialectical model of the Black Church are reiterated, giving concrete examples of how black churches still continue to interact with and play important roles in the politics, economics, and education of African Americans.

Chapter 10 focuses on one of the difficult problems which confronts black churches, the situation of black women clergy. Again, our survey findings on black women clergy are presented in the context of historical overviews of the struggle of black women to become preachers and pastors in black churches.

In chapter 11 we examine the problems which black churches have experienced in regard to black youth and young adults. Some

data on a growing sector of unchurched urban teenagers and young adults are presented, as well as a summary of the kinds of programs which black churches have sponsored for black youth. The chapter concludes with a listing of some of the creative programs being attempted by some black churches.

Chapter 12 offers a broad overview of the development and types of music from spirituals to civil rights hymnody in black churches. Although most sociologists have tended to ignore music in their studies of black churches, we felt that it could not be excluded. All black churches have been sustained and revitalized by their rich musical heritage.

In the concluding chapter 13, some major trends among black churches and religious groups are noted. The study ends with a brief statement on policy recommendations for the historic black denominations. We felt that a study of the scope and magnitude such as ours should not only describe what is happening but also provide some reflections on policy alternatives for the future. In this sense, our study has been "proactive," scholarship with some practical application. We turn next to an overview of the seven historic black denominations, the black Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals.

2 The Black Baptists: The First Black Churches in America

The cultural origins of the black Baptists are to be found in the South rather than the North as was the case with the founding of the mother congregations of the African Methodist Church and the African Methodist Zion Churches in the mid-1790s. This basic difference still holds true for the black Baptists—even though they now dominate the urban scene. Regardless of this preponderance, these churches are still characterized by a distinct Southern religious milieu which stresses enthusiastic and demonstrative worship.*

Overview

The first independent black Baptist congregations were organized in the last half of the eighteenth century, at a time when the American colonies and black Methodists alike were issuing their respective declarations of independence. The black Baptists were pursuing no overt political revolts but rather were struggling to carve out a religious space in the midst of the southern plantations that defined their lives as slaves. During the antebellum period, however, fugitive slaves and free Blacks in the North did form abolitionist missionary associations and societies, the leaders of which then organized the first regional black Baptist conventions. Many of the participants in these associations and conventions were for a long time simultaneously involved in white Baptist organizations. Miles Mark Fisher reports that:

After Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831 one must define anew a Negro Baptist church. That movement sent hot hate back and

*James M. Washington, *The Origins and Emergence of Black Baptist Separatism, 1863–1897*, p. 257 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1983).

wide consternation all over the Southland. Generally, what independence Negro churches had enjoyed was taken away. A revised black code was enacted . . . silencing . . . colored preachers. A [white] church . . . [and] association . . . would take a Negro church as a branch; and thus the independence of the Negro church was further postponed. . . .¹

Early in the Reconstruction era, however, an emergent ideology of separatism gave impetus to the organizing of a national black convention.² While this first national organization lasted but a dozen years, it established a critical precedent for subsequent efforts.

Today there are eight identifiable black Baptist communions in the United States, the largest ones being the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.; the National Baptist Convention of America; and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. These three conventions, along with the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention share a common ancestry and are the principal focus of Baptist development. Of the remaining four, the largest is the National Primitive Baptist Convention, U.S.A., which originally withdrew from the white Primitive Baptists in 1865 and organized formally in 1907. The National Primitive Baptists have an estimated 250,000 members. The United Free Will Baptist Church began in 1870, but did not formally organize as a denomination until 1901. It has an estimated membership of 100,000.

The National Baptist Evangelical Life and Soul Saving Assembly of the U.S.A., a group originally formed in 1920 as part of the National Baptist Convention of America and becoming independent in 1937, has some 50,000 members. The Free For All Missionary Baptist Church, Inc., formed in 1955, has perhaps 10,000 members. In addition to the predominantly black groups, at least 75,000 blacks belong to the Southern Baptist Convention, and at least 150,000 to the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.³ The American Baptist Churches of the South, an initially integrated but now predominantly black regional unit of the ABC, organized in the early 1970s.

Emergence of Black Baptists

The formal Baptist movement, like the Methodist, has its origins in England, although the Baptists antedate the Methodists by a century. The first Baptists evolved from a group of Puritans compelled to take

refuge in Holland as a result of persecution in their homeland. While in Holland, these Separatist Puritans became persuaded that only baptism of adult believers and baptism by immersion were doctrinally correct. They also came in contact with Anabaptists, the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation who, among other convictions, gave primacy to the separation of church and state. In this milieu the exiles established the first English Baptist church in 1609. Upon their return to England, members of this group organized a Baptist church in London around 1612. This was followed by a second church in 1616, which split over doctrinal differences in 1638. The resultant new church in turn split in 1641, giving rise to a third variation of the proliferating Baptist movement.

The American Baptist movement emerged in the colonies during the same period as the movement in England, and is generally dated from the arrival in America of Puritan Roger Williams in 1631. Exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony because of his fierce opposition to the intermingling of church and state interests, Williams obtained a charter from the British monarch to establish the Rhode Island colony, and the first Baptist Church in America was established by Williams in Providence in 1639. A second church was organized by John Clarke in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1641. A few congregations were subsequently established in Massachusetts, but the inhospitable reception there caused Rhode Island to develop as the Baptist stronghold. Throughout the seventeenth century the Rhode Island churches were typically known as "General" Baptists, a reference to their Arminian inclinations.⁴ In 1670 these congregations organized the first Baptist association, but thereafter gradually declined.

In the eighteenth century the orientation of the Baptist churches in Rhode Island and throughout the Middle Colonies became more rigorously Calvinistic in contrast to the earlier General churches. These new churches were known as "Particular" Baptists, and by 1707 five such churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware united in the formation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. By 1767 associations had also been organized in New England, Virginia, and the Carolinas. This growth in the Baptist movement was attributable in part to the mission work of the Philadelphia Association, but even more to the impact of the Great Awakening which made large numbers of people receptive to the Baptist appeal. At the same time, however, the Awakening led to a division of Baptists into two distinct groups. The "New Light" or Separate Baptists, initially concentrated

in New England, became even more extreme in their Calvinistic emphases and the intensely emotional tactics of revivalism. The "Old Light" or Regular Baptists, consisting largely of the Philadelphia Association, were more moderate in their doctrinal requirements and more traditional and decorous in their rituals of worship.

Before the end of the century Old Lights and New Lights had set aside their differences in the interests of cooperative mission efforts, and by 1800 some twelve hundred churches were organized in nearly fifty local associations. The first step toward denominational structure was taken in 1814 with the formation of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions. This fellowship subsequently was known as the American Baptist Missionary Union, and was joined by two complementary organizations, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the American Baptist Publication Society. But long before this degree of unity and organization was achieved, both the New Light and the Old Light Baptists had extended their missionary efforts to southern states where slaves attending revival services were introduced to evangelical Christianity.

The first known black Baptist, identified only as Quassey, was listed as one of fifty-one members of the Newton, Rhode Island, church in 1743. The Providence, Rhode Island, Baptist Church had nineteen black members in 1762, and blacks were first received into membership in the First Baptist Church of Boston in 1772. But by far the preponderance of black Baptists were in the South.

The National Baptists

The ancestry of the National Baptist Convention reaches back to the first known black churches in America, generally acknowledged to have been the African Baptist or "Bluestone" Church on the William Byrd plantation near the Bluestone River in Mecklenberg, Virginia, in 1758, and the Silver Bluff Baptist Church, located on the South Carolina bank of the Savannah River not far from Augusta, Georgia.⁵ Although historical records indicate that the Silver Bluff Church was established by a slave named George Liele sometime between 1773 and 1775, the cornerstone of the present church building claims a founding date of 1750.⁶ Like many other slaves, Liele embraced Christianity during the evangelistic revivals that followed the Great

Awakening. He was subsequently licensed as an exhorter to perform mission work among other slaves on neighboring plantations, which included the Galphin plantation and trading post at Silver Bluff. The church was shortlived, as a consequence of conflicts associated with the Revolutionary War. After being freed by his master, however, Liele went to Savannah where he preached for some time. He emigrated to Jamaica in 1782 or 1783, leaving behind him a baptized group of slaves, among whom was Andrew Bryan who organized the First African Church of Savannah around 1788. Bryan was assisted by another slave, Jesse Peters (also called Jesse Galphin), who was previously a member of the Silver Bluff Church and had become a preacher as a result of Liele's work. Peters became the pastor of the Springfield Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, which was organized around 1787.⁷

As these early churches grew and multiplied in the Savannah area, other independent black churches were established in cities such as Williamsburg, Richmond, and Petersburg, where there were greater numbers of blacks and proportionately more free blacks. Two black ministers, Josiah Bishop at Portsmouth and William Lemon at Gloucester are known to have pastored white Baptist churches in Virginia. Nor was it uncommon for black churches to have white pastors. Robert Ryland was the white pastor of the First African Church of Richmond for twenty-five years.⁸ Baptist churches were also established early in North Carolina and South Carolina. At the turn of the century the number of black Baptists was estimated to be in excess of 25,000.

The degree of independence diminished, however, as the number of slave members increased despite the strict regulations requiring that they have written permission to leave the plantations for worship. Many of the slaves were permitted to attend only the white churches of their masters or black churches pastored by white clergymen. Very often the slave members of nominally white churches outnumbered the white membership. In 1846 a church in Georgetown, South Carolina, had thirty-three white members compared to 798 black, while a church in Natchez, Mississippi, had sixty-two white members and 380 black.

Many slaves were obliged to worship clandestinely in hidden enclaves on the plantations as units of what came to be called the "invisible institution." But even when secrecy was not mandated, under no circumstances were the scattered independent churches

allowed to develop formal black associations, though some of them did seek to join with existing white Baptist organizations. Miles Mark Fisher has summarized the situation with sensitivity when he observes that:

A Negro Baptist church was somewhat independent in the North, although associations like those in Philadelphia and New York could appoint preachers for Negro churches. In the South a large congregation of colored people could lay no claim to sovereignty apart from the white people. This point is illustrated in the First African Baptist Church, Savannah, whose membership of seven hundred was divided into three churches by the Savannah Association in 1802. . . . Only after emancipation can complete autonomy be called a distinguishing mark of a Negro Baptist Church.⁹

As the spirit of the Revolutionary era waned and tensions were aggravated by incidents such as the planned slave uprising by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, the Denmark Vesey revolt of 1822, and the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, increasingly severe restrictions were imposed on religious activities until "independent" became a misnomer where southern black congregations were concerned. The status of blacks grew even more tenuous when the Baptists split in 1845 over the issue of slavery. Nevertheless, the number of black Baptists continued to grow, reaching 150,000 by 1850, and nearly 500,000 by 1870 as independent churches proliferated with the demise of slavery.

In the early nineteenth century organized black Baptist activity became a distinguishing feature of the northern churches. In northern states, as in the South, the move toward racially separate churches was not a matter of doctrinal disagreement, but a protest against unequal and restrictive treatment. Out of this interest emerged such historic institutions as the Joy Street Church in Boston, originally organized as the African Baptist Church by Thomas Paul in 1805; the Abyssinian Baptist Church, also founded by Thomas Paul, in 1808; and the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia, organized by Henry Cunningham in 1809.

The separation of northern black Baptists from white churches was made easier by the nature of Baptist polity. In contrast to the elaborate connectional structure of the Methodists, the hallmark of Baptist polity is the absolute independence of each local church. A

group of churches may join together in an "association," that is, a cluster of congregations within a given geographical area which may encompass several towns or counties, or only a portion of one city. Similarly, states with a substantial Baptist population invariably have one or more "state conventions." But the affiliation of a given local church with larger organizations is strictly voluntary and may be terminated at any time on the vote of the local congregation. Similarly, it is the prerogative of a state convention to affiliate or not with one of the national conventions. Furthermore, a local church may vote to affiliate directly with one or more of the national conventions, completely bypassing the state structure. So jealous are local churches of their independent status that many Baptists take exception to the very use of the word denomination in describing their loose-knit structures. This sensitivity has historically been in tension, however, with the struggles of black Baptists to create and maintain regional and national organizations.

While the departure of black Baptists from white churches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was easier than for the black Methodists, the formation of a national denomination was more difficult. Indeed, that effort preoccupied the better part of a century. From 1815 to 1880, many black Baptists worked through existing national white Baptist organizations via the African Baptist Missionary Society. The ABMS was first under the auspices of the American Baptist Union. After the 1845 division of the white Baptists over slavery, the Society became associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. The primary objective of the African Baptist Missionary Society was mission work in Africa, and the best known of its representatives was Lott Carey, one of its founders who established the First Baptist Church in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1821.

The earliest all-black Baptist associations were organized not in the South, but in the "West": Providence Association in Ohio in 1834; Union Association, also in Ohio, 1836; Wood River Association in Illinois in 1839; and Amherstburg Association in Canada and Michigan in 1841. In contrast to the white associations, the black groups generally assumed a strong abolitionist posture, and many of their members were active in the Underground Railroad in Ohio and Canada. In 1844 the Wood River Association organized the Colored Baptist Home Missionary Society, whose efforts resulted in the formation of the Western Colored Baptist Convention. The WCBC was an expanded association with representatives from seven states, and

it endured from 1853 to 1859. In 1864 this effort was revitalized by the Wood River Association with leadership assistance from the other three associations. Out of this relationship emerged a regional grouping known as the Northwestern and Southern Baptist Convention, with representatives from eight states.

The Northwestern and Southern Baptist Convention was actually the second regional convention to be formed. The first, the American Baptist Missionary Convention, had been organized fully two decades before emancipation at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City in 1840, for purposes of evangelization, education, and general racial uplift. This convention was restricted in its activities to the New England and Middle Atlantic areas until after the Civil War, when it sent black ministers to the South as missionaries.

In 1866 in a meeting of the Plan of Union Committees held in Richmond, these two regional conventions merged in what was the first attempt to create a national convention. The Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, as it was called, held its first official meeting in August 1867 in Nashville, and in 1868 reported a constituency of 100,000 black Baptists, with 200 ministers. The Consolidated Convention, consisting of six subdivisions called district conventions, lasted for twelve years. It held its final meeting in 1879, by which time it was already fragmenting into separate regional conventions.

Partly as a result of heightened race consciousness, partly in reaction to the discrimination of southern white Baptists and the paternalism of northern white Baptists, the independent church movement initiated among black Baptists in the antebellum period intensified during the Reconstruction and its aftermath. Though in tension with a competing school of thought which favored working on a cooperative basis with whites within the existing northern Baptist organizations, the separatist ideology prevailed and ultimately culminated in the establishment of an independent Baptist denomination. The first national effort at consolidation, the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, foundered on the shoals of inadequate financial support and internal class conflicts between the educated northern blacks and the southern ex-slaves on such issues as emotional fervor and political activism. Upon the demise of this convention, however, three new organizations came into existence.

The Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States of

America was formed at a meeting of 151 delegates from 11 states convened by Rev. W. W. Colley in Montgomery, Alabama, on November 24, 1880. It was originally headquartered in Richmond, with Rev. Mr. Colley serving as corresponding secretary. The convention not only sent missionaries to Africa, but concerned itself with such domestic social issues as the use of alcohol and tobacco.

The American National Baptist Convention was organized August 25, 1886, at a meeting of 600 delegates from churches in 17 states convened in St. Louis, under the leadership of Rev. William J. Simmons, who became its first president. This convention, which claimed over one million constituents in some 9,000 churches with 4,500 ministers, represented the most ambitious effort to date to create a black Baptist denomination, an initiative pursued in spite of resistance from northern white Baptists.

The third convention, the National Baptist Educational Convention of the U.S.A., was formed in Washington, D.C., in 1893 under the leadership of Rev. W. Bishop Johnson for the primary purpose of educating and training clergy and missionaries.

At the 1894 annual meeting of these various bodies in Montgomery, a motion was made proposing their merger into one convention, whereupon a joint committee was appointed to report on the proposal the following year. The merger was accomplished at a meeting convened in Atlanta on September 28, 1895, and attended by over 500 delegates and observers. The resulting organization was the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., with subsidiary Foreign Mission, Home Mission, and Education boards, to which a publishing concern was added in 1897. Rev. E. C. Morris was elected the first president of the new convention.

The display of unity was timely because African Americans had entered into an era of intensified repression. From 1890 to 1910 legislation was passed by all southern states which effectively disenfranchised African Americans, and gave license to lynchings and other forms of racial suppression. The Supreme Court also ratified the Jim Crow segregation by approving "separate but equal" railroad cars and, by extension, in all other public facilities in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. In the process, the ranks of the black churches, which constituted the sole place of sanctuary, expanded accordingly. Between 1890 and 1906 the number of black Baptist ministers increased from 5,500 to over 17,000.

Baptist unity was short lived, however. When a new corresponding

secretary was appointed to the Foreign Mission Board and its headquarters moved from Richmond to Louisville, some of the original members of the board declined to cooperate and withdrew in 1897 to form the Lott Carey Foreign Missionary Convention. The issues involved loyalties to the old Foreign Mission Convention which had been based in Richmond (as had the original African Baptist Missionary Society) and resentment of the publishing activities of the new convention, which jeopardized the relations of the Richmond group with the white Baptist organizations.

Withdrawal of the Lott Carey contingent, made up of better-educated members from Virginia, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia, was an expression once again of the class and ideological differences that had long plagued the movement for denominational independence.

In 1905 the Lott Carey Convention and the National Baptist Convention were ostensibly reconciled. Today they continue to function as independent bodies, although most of their members and officers have a dual affiliation. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., meanwhile, became a distinctly black denomination but internal conflicts persisted. The convention was to experience schism twice more in the next century, once in 1915 with the formation of the National Baptist Convention of America, and again in 1961, with the organizing of the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

To some degree, these divisions are transcended, if not obscured, in efforts supported cooperatively by the different conventions. A number of black institutions of higher learning have Baptist origins and maintain Baptist affiliations. They are not, however, generally under the direct jurisdiction of one particular convention. They may receive support from the various black conventions, as well as from one or both of the major white conventions, or they may be sponsored principally by a state convention. Many of these institutions were founded in the years immediately following emancipation (often as secondary schools) by the white American Baptist Home Mission Society. Others were established by black Baptists around the turn of the century. A dozen of these schools survive today as junior colleges, and another dozen as four-year colleges. Among them are Benedict College, in Columbia, South Carolina; Virginia Union University, Richmond; Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina; and Morehouse College and Spelman College in Atlanta. Some schools like Tuskegee Institute were closely aligned with the Baptists due to

the influence of leaders like Dr. Booker T. Washington. The American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville is jointly operated by the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention, Inc.

National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

After the schism in 1915 which produced the National Baptist Convention of America, the NBC, U.S.A., incorporated and its other boards became subordinate to the convention.¹⁰ Rev. E. C. Morris, who had first been elected president when the NBC was created in 1895, continued in that capacity with the incorporated body until 1922. Following the loss of the publishing concern in 1915, a new board was created, the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention. The Foreign Mission Board, however, replaced the publishing concern as the center of the convention's operations.

The convention also involved itself in domestic interests. Even before the turn of the century the NBC was active in education, supporting nearly 100 elementary and secondary schools and colleges, as well as providing for the education of African missionaries. In the first decade of the new century the NBC spoke out against racial violence and waged campaigns against segregation in public accommodations and discrimination in the armed service, education, and employment. These and other activities were generally carried out within the prevailing ideological framework of self-help. While both Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois were frequent speakers at the annual conventions, it was Washington's program which the convention formally endorsed in 1909. The NBC, Inc., strongly supported the NAACP, however, and was vocal on such matters as the right to vote and to serve on juries.

At the time of the split in 1915 the National Baptist Convention represented nearly 3 million black people in over 20,000 local Baptist churches. Spurred by the northern migration of African Americans over the next several decades, both conventions experienced a shift from rural to urban churches, and a rapid growth in membership.

E. C. Morris was succeeded as convention president by W. G. Parks, who served only one year before L. K. Williams took office in 1924. D. V. Jemison was elected president in 1941 and served until 1952. In 1953 J. H. Jackson became president and held that office for a record twenty-nine years.

At the time of Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Jackson's election, the NBC, Inc., had nine boards and commissions. To these the new president added an additional thirteen. The program expansion was not reflective of social concerns, however, as the convention took a decidedly conservative turn. Jackson represented a strong vocal opposition to Martin Luther King and King's strategy of civil disobedience and nonviolent protest. Under his slogan of "from protest to production!" he located himself in the patriotic, law and order, anticommunist, pro-capitalist, school of gradualism. Although his was a position out of favor with most younger African Americans, Jackson succeeded in blocking the participation of the convention as an institution in the civil rights movement. King, for his part, left the NBC, Inc., as one of the leaders of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, a splinter group founded in 1961.

In contrast, Jackson's successor, Rev. Dr. Theodore J. Jemison, was a veteran of the civil rights movement, having organized a bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1953, and having served as the first general secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Upon his election in 1982 Jemison pledged his support for social action in pursuit of civil rights, and initiated a nationwide voter registration drive.

The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., is by far the largest of all the black denominations, and is considered the largest organization of African Americans in existence. The NBC, Inc., reports about 7.5 million members, of whom all but 100,000 are in the United States. The membership thus encompasses nearly one-fourth of the entire black population of the United States, and at least one-third of the estimated number of black members of Christian churches. Over 29,000 clergy and 30,000 local churches are affiliated with the convention, as are 4,700 associations and 59 state conventions. The annual budget of the National Convention in 1989 was about \$4.5 million.¹¹

NBC, Inc., convenes once a year, at the same time in September as the National Baptist Convention of America. Local churches, associations, and state conventions are required to pay a fee of from \$10 to \$50 for representative delegates, depending on the size and type of the sponsoring group, except that state conventions pay \$200 for the first two messengers. Individuals may join the convention by paying an annual membership fee of \$10, but they are not entitled to vote. Life membership is awarded upon payment of \$200.

The officers of the convention are elected annually. Offices speci-

fied in the constitution include president, vice president-at-large, four vice presidents, vice presidents from each of the states represented, general secretary, four assistant secretaries, treasurer, statistician, historiographer, executive editor, and attorney. The convention is governed by a board of directors, which consists of fifteen members-at-large elected by the convention in addition to the named officers. The board of directors and its nine-member executive committee are responsible for conducting the business of the convention when it is not in session.

Traditionally, the purpose of the National Convention has been to carry on work in areas such as education, mission, and publishing which could not be done effectively by individual churches and would be done less efficiently by multiple regional bodies. More recently the national body has also assumed responsibility for matters such as ministerial pension plans. Current information on the organization of the convention is restricted inasmuch as no literature setting forth the president's program has been published since the change in administration in 1982. (The convention is empowered to create each year whatever boards are deemed necessary to carry out its work.) The scope of its activity is suggested by the auxiliary conventions and boards officially reporting at the 1980 session of the convention. These included Foreign Mission, Home Mission, Sunday School Publishing, Baptist Training Union (B.T.U.), Education, Evangelistic, and Benefit boards, and Usher's and Moderator's Auxiliaries. The Laymen's Movement Auxiliary, Women's Convention Auxiliary, and Congress of Christian Education (formerly Sunday School and B.T.U. Congress) are specifically provided for in the constitution. A Young People's Department, operated as a subsidiary of the Women's Convention, is subdivided into several units based on age and marital status of the girls and young women. The Laymen's Auxiliary has a department for boys. Various commissions appointed from time to time address such matters as social service, rural life, theological education, theology, church-supported schools, ecumenical Christianity, the United Nations, civil rights, and intercultural relations.

According to the constitution, each board is to be made up of one member from each state and territory represented at the convention, plus an additional eight members from the state in which the board is located. Each board determines its own laws and regulations, nominates its own officers, and selects its own employees, who are then

subject to ratification by the convention or its board of directors. Several of the boards have counterpart departments to implement the various programs. The auxiliary conventions generally meet in session at the same time as the National Convention. They have their own officers and committee structures, and in some instances a separate constitution and their own publications.

The convention presently has no permanent national headquarters, although it has plans to complete a new \$12 million National Baptist World Center in Nashville in 1990, adjacent to the American Baptist Theological Seminary (jointly supported by National Baptists and Southern Baptists). Its current president, T. J. Jemison, pastors the Mount Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, while the general secretary resides in Mount Vernon, New York, and its publishing house, the Sunday School Publishing Board, is located in Nashville.

National Baptist Convention of America

The National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), originally called the National Baptist Convention, Unincorporated, is a product of the 1915 split in the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., which was founded in 1895. The central issue in this conflict was the publishing concern, which had also been a factor in the 1897 schism resulting in the Lott Carey Convention. This time the dispute involved the "Boyd faction" led by R. H. Boyd, secretary of the Publishing Board, and the "Morris faction," led by E. C. Morris, president of the convention. Ultimately, the Boyd faction took the name "National Baptist Convention of America" and remained unincorporated. The Morris faction retains the original name of the convention, but incorporated to become the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

Both groups claim to be the original parent body. Both claim the founding date of 1880. In fact, no unified National Baptist Convention existed in 1880, which was the founding date of the oldest of the three entities that merged in 1895. In short, while three Baptist bodies went into the funnel in 1895, two emerged from the other end in 1915.¹²

The conflict was set in motion shortly after the NBC, U.S.A. was created, when the American Baptist Publication Society, upon com-

plaints from Southern Baptists, withdrew its invitation for black leaders to write articles for one of its publications. As a result of this impasse, the National Baptist Convention determined to establish its own publishing capabilities. The new Publishing Board was initially placed under the Home Mission Board of which R. H. Boyd (who introduced the resolution proposing the printing committee) served as corresponding secretary.

Under Boyd's leadership and on the basis of his personal credit the Publishing Board quickly became a successful business venture. New facilities were built on land owned by Boyd in Nashville, who had the agency incorporated in the state of Tennessee, and materials produced by the publishing house were copyrighted in his name. When in 1905 the Rev. Mr. Morris acted to separate the publishing house from the Home Mission Board, Boyd and the other members of the board resisted, and a decade-long controversy ensued centered around the question of ownership and control of the publishing interest. Ultimately the conflict was resolved in Boyd's favor by the courts of Tennessee. The convention itself was unincorporated and so unable to own property in its own name and although it had created the Publishing Board, it had neglected to make proper provisions for legal claim to it.

The National Baptist Publishing Board became the nucleus of a separate National Baptist body, which was organized in Chicago on September 9, 1915. As this convention moved to establish additional boards, an agreement was struck whereby all foreign mission work of the new group would be conducted through the Lott Carey Convention. The latter thereby strengthened its hand in missions, while the NBCA gained an enlarged audience for its literature. Over the years, however, this working relationship declined and NBCA ultimately organized an independent Foreign Mission Board. In addition to the issues of prohibition, evangelism, and education, the NBCA gave early support to civil rights organizations, urban social service programs, and the antilynching campaign.

The Boyd family continues to be prominent in the NBCA publishing concern. Henry Allen Boyd succeeded his father, R. H. Boyd, in 1922, and he in turn was succeeded by his nephew, T. B. Boyd, Jr., who led the publishing house from 1959 to 1979. Since 1979 the Publishing Board has been headed by T. B. Boyd III, in his capacity as executive director.

Rev. E. P. Jones was elected president of the convention at the time

of its organizing. His successors were J. E. Woods, 1923; J. W. Hurse, 1930; G. L. Prince, 1933; C. D. Pettaway, 1957; J. C. Sams, 1967; and E. E. Jones, 1985.¹³

The National Baptist Convention of America is the second largest of the three black Baptist conventions having a national constituency, and the third largest of all the black denominations. In 1989 its estimated membership of 2.4 million in 7,800 local churches indicates an average congregation of about 280, which is somewhat larger than the average congregation of the National Baptist Convention, Inc. (235), but far smaller than that of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (a thousand). These churches are served by from 2,500 to 3,000 clergy, suggesting a substantial number of small rural churches. Some four hundred associations, ranging from five to a hundred local churches, and thirty-five state conventions in twenty-seven states, are affiliated with the convention.¹⁴

The NBCA convenes every year on the Wednesday following the first Sunday in September. Convention delegates called "messengers" include lay and ministerial representatives from local churches, associations, and state conventions. Each church is assessed a minimum of \$50, or \$1 per member for the first messenger, and \$10 for each additional messenger. Each district association pays \$50 for the first two messengers, and \$10 for each additional messenger; each general association and state convention pays \$100 for the first five messengers, and \$10 for each additional messenger.

The officers of the convention are elected annually and include a president; first, second, and third vice presidents; recording secretary; first, second, third, and fourth assistant recording secretaries; corresponding secretary; statistical secretary; treasurer; auditor; director of public relations; historian; and secretary of youth activities. The presidents of the state conventions and moderators of the general associations are associate vice presidents. The Executive Board, which conducts the business of the convention when it is not in session, consists of the elected convention officers and presidents of the state conventions. The constitution provides for five administrative committees: Registration, Budget, Finance, Bills and Accounts, and Credentials.

The NBCA has seven program boards: Home Mission, Foreign Mission, Baptist Training Union, National Baptist Publishing, Evangelical, Benevolent, and Educational. The membership of each board consists of one member from each state convention and general asso-

ciation. The auxiliaries of the convention include two Women's Missionary auxiliaries, Junior Women's Auxiliary, Brotherhood Union, Ushers, Nurses' Corps, and Youth Convention. Each board and auxiliary elects its own officers, although the officers of the latter are subject to ratification by the convention. The constitution also specifies four commissions: Transportation, Christian Education, Social Justice, and Army and Navy Chaplains.

The NBCA does not have centralized national headquarters. The publishing house is in Nashville. The principal officers do not ordinarily relinquish their offices as local pastors.

In 1988 a new schism occurred in the NBCA over the question of the Boyd family's control of the Publishing House. With an estimated 25 percent of the membership, the Boyd faction styled itself the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America (NMBCA). It remains to be seen whether this group will emerge as the fourth major black Baptist denomination.

Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

The Progressive National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., (PNBC) came into existence in 1961 as a result of conflict within the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. The dissension began in 1957 when ten pastors were expelled from the NBC, Inc., for challenging the president, J. H. Jackson, in court on his ruling that an amendment setting a four-year limit on tenure was invalid, inasmuch as it had been adopted in 1952 in a manner that was procedurally unconstitutional. Jackson's position was upheld by a federal court.¹⁵

His opponents, reacting to the larger issue of what was perceived as autocratic rule, subsequently organized around the candidacy of Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor.¹⁶ The "Taylor team," as it was called, included Martin Luther King, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Benjamin Mays, and a number of other clergy committed to King's social change strategies which Jackson condemned as inadvisable and injurious to the cause of racial advance and harmony.

At the 1960 convention in Philadelphia, the nominating committee unanimously presented Jackson's name for another term, whereupon he was declared reelected. When the Taylor team protested, demanding a roll call vote by states, the convention was declared

adjourned. The delegates remained, however, and conducted an election in which Taylor won. When the Jackson faction refused to acknowledge the vote results, the Taylor team proceeded to conduct a sit-in at the convention. The Taylor faction claimed throughout the following year to be the rightful officers of the convention, but the courts again ruled in Jackson's favor.

The next year, in Kansas City, Missouri, the Taylor delegates, who had been meeting in separate session, were initially denied admission to the larger assembly. When they were admitted, physical confrontations erupted as they moved to take control of the platform. Ultimately, a court-supervised election was held, and Jackson emerged victorious. Taylor acknowledged the results, and he and King both called for unity. Before the convention was ended, however, Martin Luther King, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., D. E. King, Marshall L. Shepard, C. C. Adams and others were removed from any offices they held, including membership on the board of directors.

Rev. L. Venhael Booth assumed leadership of the opposition and, as the chairman of the "Volunteer Committee for the Formation of a New National Baptist Convention," called for a meeting in November 1961 at his church, Zion Baptist Church, in Cincinnati. The thirty-three people who attended from fourteen states voted to start a separate convention. The first annual meeting was held in Philadelphia the following year. Rev. T. M. Chambers was elected the first president; he was succeeded in 1967 by Gardner Taylor.

The new convention adopted as its motto: "Unity, Service, Fellowship, Peace." PNBC was actively involved in the civil rights movement, was supportive of the black power movement, and was one of the earliest groups to publicly oppose the war in Vietnam.¹⁷ In more recent years it has given emphasis to black political development, economic development, education and job training, and strengthening of the black family. Around 1970 several white churches established dual affiliations with PNBC. Conversely, many PNBC churches today maintain dual affiliations with one of the white conventions.¹⁸

The Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., is the smallest of the three National Baptist conventions. In 1989 the denomination claimed 1,000 clergy with 1.2 million members in 1,000 churches, giving it an average congregation of 1,000. Its estimated budget was \$1.2 million for that year. The unusually large size of the congregations is attributable to the fact that the convention's membership consists primarily of churches in major metropolitan areas, many of