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Religious discourse as cultural narrative: A critical analysis of the rhetoric of African-American sermons

Hamlet, Janice Denise, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1989

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RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE AS CULTURAL NARRATIVE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RHETORIC OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN SERMONS

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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1989
To the memory of those African-American preachers who preached, marched, and died for the cause of Civil Rights in America.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

One of the most important social upheavals in the United States during the past twenty five years has been the Civil Rights Movement.¹

This period of social protest was characterized by the flash of blackjacks, the horrible glows of house bombings and cross-burnings, piercing shouts of hatred, and the cries of despair. The situations which prompted these acts were evident. Schools, neighborhoods, restaurants, theaters, city buses, restrooms and even drinking fountains were rigidly segregated, and because of these and other conditions, African-Americans were protesting. The protests began in the South, and like wildfire, quickly spread to the North.

African-Americans wanted to end discrimination so that they could have access to better housing, jobs, and pay. They also wanted the right to eat inside nice restaurants and sleep in hotels, to sit wherever they liked on public buses, and to be addressed in a manner that conveyed
respect. In essence, they wanted the American dream to be real for them, too.

In terms of the magnitude of the evils that needed to be corrected, the number of persons who were directly affected, the courage of the leaders and participants, the concern felt by a national audience, and the corrective measures proposed or taken by the government, the effort the Civil Rights Movement made to gain equality for African-Americans in mainstream society engaged the nation more than any other issue of our times, notes Leon Friedman in his assessment of the movement.²

In *The Cry For Freedom*, Frank Hale adds that although it was the Rosa Parks' incident that ignited the Civil Rights Movement, it was through the dramatic figure of an African-American preacher, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that the African-American community grasped an opportunity "to cloak its social and political aspirations under great moral and religious leadership."³

King's philosophy of nonviolent resistance quickly spread throughout America, and through his influence it was most often African-American preachers who were leading the nonviolent protest.⁴

**Purpose of the Study**

This study focuses on selected African-American sermons which were preached during the Civil Rights
Movement. It represents an inside view of African-American preachers' rhetorical behavior as seen through an African-American cultural perspective and interpreted according to African-American cultural norms.

In undertaking such an endeavor, this study is based on the notion that communication and culture are inseparably linked. This notion is well established in communication, anthropology, and sociology and other disciplines (e.g. linguistics and psychology.) It has been researched and discussed by numerous scholars. Some of these include: Edmund Leach;⁵ Edward T. Hall;⁶ Alfred Smith;⁷ Dean Barnlund;⁸ Marshall McLuhan;⁹ Wade Nobles;¹⁰ and Dell Hymes.¹¹

To say that communication and culture are inseparably linked means that when we engage in public communication, (as well as in intra or interpersonal communication), consciously or unconsciously, our cultural background affects all of our actions and reactions, thus, simultaneously reflecting and creating a cultural context.

Cultural context, as it is being used in this study, refers to the environment, and its accompanying conditions and circumstances out of which our rhetorical behavior is directed.¹² This definition does not imply that everyone within the same cultural milieu speaks an identical rhetoric. However, it does suggest that individuals within the same culture are influenced by the circumstances and
backgrounds of their culture. Hence, there exists an interplay between our culture and our rhetorical behavior.

In terms of religious rhetoric, the focus of this study, the Reverend Warren Stewart, a noted African-American scholar in the area of African-American preaching, provides a discussion of preachers preaching within a cultural context in his work, *Interpreting God's Word*. Stewart notes:

> The preacher does not come to a text with a clean slate. Years of preconditioning by one's culture, training, religious background, experiences, etc., are introduced into the text to be interpreted. Quite important are the context of the interpreter and the context of those to whom the message is addressed. This implies that the majority of hermeneutics in preaching is done by preachers who preach to listeners who are members of the same cultural milieu.

This argument is also echoed by other theologians, e.g. Fred Craddock, Henry Mitchell, James Cone, and Eugene Lowrey.

The African-American sermons offered during the historic Civil Rights Movement provide an appropriate research project in identifying and assessing African-American sermons' cultural context and the messages they communicate.

If we accept the notion that people's attitudes are shaped by the institutions with which they are closely affiliated, then African-American churches are good examples of institutions which have the greatest opportunity to
provide a cultural content that molds and shapes individual attitudes.\textsuperscript{18}

By focusing on African-American religious rhetoric, this study offers a viable contribution to our knowledge of African-American preachers as cultural spokespersons and leaders, representing what is known as the African-American or "black community."

The African-American community is a highly diversified set of interrelated structures and aggregates of people who are held together by a common cultural heritage and the forces of white oppression and racism. This African-American community is unified in its cultural background and its awareness of the forces of oppression. It is also unified in its awareness of the need to strengthen African-American social, economic and political institutions for group survival and advancement. However, the African-American community is diversified in its ideologies and strategies to attain these goals. Other factors also contribute to the diversity. These include (but are not limited to) different lifestyles, earned incomes, educational and occupational pursuits, family structures, and religious doctrines and practices.\textsuperscript{19}

An example of the African-American community's diversity could be seen in the different strategies proposed concerning the best way to fight racism as it existed in America during the sixties. The two most well-known
strategies were those proposed by two national African-American leaders, Dr. King and Malcolm X. On the one hand, King, a Protestant preacher, proclaimed that the best way to fight racism in America was to practice nonviolence implemented through Christian principles.

Said King:

Our method will be that of persuasion, not coercion. We will only say to the people, 'Let your conscience be your guide.' Emphasizing the Christian doctrine of love, our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal. Once again we must heed the words of Jesus echoing across the centuries: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' If we fail to do this our protest will end up as a meaningless drama on the stage of history, and its memory will be shrouded with ugly garments of shame. In spite of the mistreatment that we have confronted we must not become bitter, and end up by hating our white brothers.

Many African-Americans adopted King's ideology and followed him. But, on the other hand, there was Malcolm X, a Black Muslim preacher, who rejected Christianity and advocated self-defense by any means necessary even if it meant violence.

Said Malcolm X:

Now when the time comes for our freedom, you want to reach back in the bag and grab somebody who's nonviolent and peaceful and forgiving and long-suffering. I don't go for that--no. I say that a black man's freedom is as valuable as a white man's freedom. And I say that a black man has the right to do whatever is necessary to get his freedom that other human beings have done to get his freedom. I say that you and I will never get our freedom nonviolently and patiently and lovingly. We will never get it until we let
the world know that as other human beings have laid down their lives for freedom—and also taken life for freedom—that you and I are ready and willing and equipped and qualified to do the same thing.21

Malcolm X, too, had a large following, thereby giving African-Americans a choice between nonviolent tactics or possible violence (in self-defense) in the fight to overcome racism in America. In view of the African-American community's diversity, I have chosen to examine the ideology and rhetoric that was used by the African-American Protestant preachers who advocated the nonviolent ideology in their efforts to attain racial equality for the larger African-American community during the historic Civil Rights Movement. Three African-American Protestant denominations are represented in this study. They are: the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. A justification of this selection is provided in Chapter III.

This study does not advocate that the nonviolent approach implemented by these Protestant preachers was better than the rhetoric of those who advocated self-defense. The focus here is to critically discuss and examine the rhetorical strategies these preachers used and to shed more light on the choice they made in view of African-Americans' cultural context. Readers are welcome to form their own opinions regarding which approach was the most effective.
The arguments concerning communication and culture suggests the following research questions:

1. What is the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American preachers?

2. What can rhetorical theorists and critics learn from such a study?

Justification of Study

These are significant research questions for several reasons. First, African-American preachers have been the most influential cultural spokespersons for their race with the longest tenure of leadership dating back to the moment Africans were brought to America as indentured servants and slaves.\textsuperscript{22} Traditionally they have used their spiritual calling and theological knowledge as a means to help ease the burdens of prejudice and oppression. The African-American community believes that their preachers have a greater awareness of the intimate problems affecting their lives and are able to speak to these problems.\textsuperscript{23} It has and continues to be in this category of religious vernacular or "pulpit rhetoric" that African-American preachers, as spokespersons, have made their mark in American society. This notion has not been more evident than during the historic Civil Rights Movement of the late fifties and the turbulent sixties.
As African-Americans were confronted by racism in almost every facet of their existence, (e.g., public transportation, housing, employment, education), African-American churches became surrogate worlds for those who sought refuge inside their walls as they searched for answers to and relief from racial tensions and fear. African-American preachers responded to this challenge through inspirational, thought-provoking sermons directed to a people who shared common backgrounds and realities.

The African-American sermon is a cultural art form used not only to provide instruction in morality and religion, but also to transmit information, release tension, promote self-growth, and provide a social and spiritual outlet to African-Americans. These sermons can be viewed as tools the members of the African-American religious community use in order to interpret the situations that they face such as race hatred, discrimination, and unemployment. Through sermons, African-American preachers recreate meaningful experiences which combine theology with cultural values and everyday relevance to the listeners. Consequently, in addition to experiencing an emotional, spiritual uplifting, the listeners are provided with creative solutions to everyday challenges and problems.

Finally, it has traditionally been assumed that the African-American religious community thrives solely on emotion-filled, loud, "fire and brimstone" preaching,
complemented with the type of individualistic showmanship reminiscent of orators during the elocutionary movement of the eighteenth century. Scholars have devoted some attention to the delivery aspect of African-American pulpit oratory. This focus has centered primarily on the call-response interaction that exists between some African-American preachers and their audiences, (e.g. Jack Daniel and Geneva Smitherman; W. H. Pipes; Gerald Davis; Thomas Kochman.) Delivery, however, is only one component of pulpit oratory.

This study does not seek to ignore nor negate the importance of delivery to public speaking or its importance to the African-American religious experience. The focus here is to direct more attention to the other component of African-American religious oratory—the message component. The notion that African-American religious audiences, like white religious audiences, want a coherent, comprehensive experience that affects their intellect as well as their emotions has too often been ignored by mainstream society.

These research questions, which focus on the message of African-American sermons, should enlighten rhetorical scholars on the power of the spoken word; the significance of African American preachers as cultural spokespersons; and a cultural approach to studying the rhetoric of African-Americans. The content of African-American sermons is a
component of the African-American tradition's rhetorical gift that justifies separate treatment.

Research Procedures

Research for this project began with an examination of a collection of sermons published under the title, The Pulpit Speaks on Race. Included in the collection were sermons from both African-American and White American preachers representing various faiths. However, in spite of the fact that all of the sermons were developed around the issue of race relations in America as it existed during the fifties and sixties, a distinct difference could be detected in the content of those sermons offered by African-American and White American preachers.

For example, sermons from White American preachers in this collection provided prescriptive messages to the listeners, suggesting that they should be, "sympathetic" to minorities and all that they have been through. The following sermon excerpt is representative of the types of messages conveyed by the White American preachers. This specific sermon is entitled, "On Loving One's Neighbor as Oneself."

In the long run, human rights rest upon community of feeling. American history is instructive on this point. The American Constitution is the basic body of law and right. What is behind it? The War for Independence, climaxing in a Declaration of Independence. What is behind that? A Sense of unity residing in the thirteen colonies, transcending their
differences. Historians tell us now that months, years, before Paul Revere rode that night to Concord and Lexington to warn of the British advance, he and other bold riders had been moving up and down the Atlantic seaboard carrying messages to and from the patriots. Like shuttles they sped back and forth, weaving a fabric of unity. They did their work so well that when the crucial hour came and the British attached Massachusetts distant Virginia felt it was an attack on her, and George Washington went at once to her aid. Out of that community of feeling came independence, and finally a new and greater unity.

Well the first task of the church is to weave a fabric of sympathy by which our minority brethren may lose their bonds and be united in a stronger and closer fellowship. When love becomes qualitative a feeling for the other person's feelings, racial exclusiveness in the church will cease.32

Focusing on some of the heros of the American Revolution, this preacher urged white brethren to respect minority brethren and learn to treat them better. The preacher used legalese and patriotism to elicit sympathy and support for civil rights activities. Hence, he is speaking from a cultural context African-Americans were not allowed to experience (totally) with their white counterparts.

On the other hand, the sermons offered by the African-American preachers in the collection presented more intimate dialogues, drawing analogies between Biblical scriptures and African-American history. These preachers can do this more effectively than the White American preachers because they have a firsthand awareness of the situations about which they speak. This awareness involves the nature of being
unfree, of having no home of one's own, of living in a place where one is a resident but not a fully accepted citizen.

The use of analogies between Biblical people and African-Americans is not new. Its use in African-American sermons and other types of speeches given by African-Americans has a rich cultural legacy which dates back to the slavery era. The legacy exists because it was and continues to be effective among African-American audiences.

The following sermon, entitled, "We Seek A City," is representative of the type of sermons that were offered by African-American preachers in the collection.

The enslaved Israelites never lost sight of the city of their dreams—Zion. They could not help contrasting the ecstasy of the Holy City with the painful inconveniences of their Babylonian captivity. As they sat by the waters of Babylon they thought of the smoking altars, the solemn pageantry, and the antiphonal singing of the city called Zion. They remembered that the city of their dreams was one where each man sat under his own vine and fig tree—it was the city of freedom. And every time these slaves thought about it they wept.

When bidden to sing they refused, for they would not fill the air of a city of bondage with the songs of freedom. Their instruments of music were left hanging on the swaying branches of the willow trees. They yearned for freedom but their fare was slavery. They could not reach their maximum potential under such conditions. This drab existence was a far cry from the life God intended for them. They longed to travel to the holy city of freedom.

Like the ancient Israelites we too seek a city. It is a city which shall be illumined by the holy light of freedom and where all citizens should be called brothers. We seek a city where the relationship between men will be regulated more by something internal—a renewed spirit—
than by something external known as law. To be sure, just laws must exist. There must be no stopping short of this. But the Christian is called to go beyond the mere external regulation of behavior between people. There must be that "something within that holdeth the reins." Where this is lies the city which we seek.33

In critiquing the collection of sermons offered for the cause of civil rights, some sermons requested sympathy for an oppressed group; the other sermons called for commitment, racial consciousness and pride from the oppressed group. In view of what these sermons had to offer, a conclusion was drawn from the critiques that the preachers' cultural backgrounds contributed a dominant portion of the religious content they communicated to their audiences. The sermons not only reflected their culture but also played an important part in shaping it by directing the listener's (or reader's) attention to what should or should not be important in their lives. This conclusion became the basis for the study.

Retaining those sermons in the book that were offered by African-American preachers, a search began for other sermons offered by African-American preachers during the period of the historic Civil Rights Movement. Several collections of African-American sermons from this period were acquired through automated library searches, theological seminary libraries and bookstores, and from the personal libraries of local African-American pastors. These works comprise the research data for analysis. A more
detailed justification of the sermons selected for study is provided in Chapter III.

Theoretical Framework

After acquiring the sermons, a search began for a framework in which to analyze them. Bernard L. Brock states that in the process of rhetorical criticism, "the critic not only needs a language to describe man as he responds to his world but also a theoretical framework for understanding man's basic rhetorical tendencies." However, one of the most perplexing problems for rhetorical critics is in deciding on the best method to employ in a study. Herbert Simons labels this dilemma "either-or-thinking," an inclination to adhere to one rhetorical perspective and a rejection of all other methods. This approach has been manifested in scholarly disputes over definitions and focus which often frustrate critics in searching for common grounds.

In view of Brock and Simons' observations, a search began for a framework that would shed more light on the African-American perspective behind speaking events. The search resulted in the utilization of multiple tools borrowed from several disciplines. The approach can be referred to as pluralism.

The pluralistic approach to criticism enables a critic to adopt a method for a given project in criticism that is
most appropriate to the subject matter. This approach is most likely to produce more information than single conventional methods because it is not as restricted.

Interest in a pluralistic approach to rhetorical criticism can be traced to Mark Klyn's 1968 essay in which he criticized the monistic attitude among traditional rhetorical critics. In the essay Klyn noted:

The most important result of the monistic attitude is that conventional rhetorical critics have tended to delimit the meaning and consequences of a work of rhetoric in a special, very narrow way.36

Since 1968, pluralism has been increasingly advocated by rhetorical critics. Some of the rhetorical critics who advocate pluralism include Karlyn Campbell who argues that a pluralistic view is desirable because it encourages scholars to decide among many existing methods. This, she argues, is indicative of maturity and vigor in research.37 Malcolm Sillars advocates pluralism noting that the approach demands more rigor than a study which utilizes a single conventional method.38 Kenneth Burke also argues that the more perspectives that can be brought to bear on a text, the more that text will be illuminated.39 Wayne Booth makes the same point in describing how a pluralist operates with a frame of acceptance. He argues that the pluralist will examine the question each critic has chosen to ask, the critical language he or she employs and his or her characteristic way of seeking evidence and reasoning with it.40 Finally,
Robert Scott and Brock suggests that if a pluralistic attitude becomes generally recognized and understood scholars should see a lessening of interest in theorizing about criticism and a revitalized concern with criticizing public discourse. Methods will develop from the variety of questions asked rather than critics selecting a research method and finding data to apply to it.\footnote{1}

In sum, pluralism encourages the critic to search for and utilize perspectives which will most appropriately answer the question(s) posed. This search for answers, which may lead the scholar outside of his or her discipline, seems to exemplify a maturity in scholarship. It also challenges the critic to refrain from using a single conventional method simply because he or she is most comfortable with that method. This is a trap scholars sometimes fall into, and the results often lead to a mere promotions campaign for the method rather than a critical response to research questions.

This study does not suggest that pluralism should be implemented for every rhetorical study. But, the study does suggest that the research questions should dictate the method(s). There are concerns and perceived weaknesses in utilizing a pluralistic approach. These concerns will be addressed in Chapter VII.

In utilizing a pluralistic approach, this study borrows from anthropology and sociology to help explain and
develop the notion of a cultural context. The idea of culture is anthropology's most important conceptual contribution to the social sciences. Anthropologists (e.g. Sir Edward Tylor; Margaret Mead; Ruth Benedict; Alfred Smith) have provided some of the most extensive research on how cultures are developed and maintained. Building from the research in anthropology, sociologists (e.g. Paul Horton and Chester Hunt; Amuzie Chimezie; James Blackwell) have made indepth contributions to scholarship through research focusing on how cultural contexts are created and nurtured.

In determining the interplay between African-American culture and preachers, these two disciplines provided the most extensive information in helping me to respond to this study's dominant question.

The history discipline plays an important role in this study in tracing the events of the Civil Rights Movement which nurtured a cultural context created by African-Americans before their ancestors arrived in America.

Finally, in terms of cultural relativism, this study borrows from Molefi Asante's Afrocentric metatheory for the actual analysis of the African-American sermons selected for study. Asante has developed a message-culture derived framework which seeks to find a source of critical analysis in the cues of the speaker's culture. The framework, known as Afrocentricity, means literally, placing African ideals
at the center of any analysis that involves African-American culture and behavior. Asante notes:

All cultural systems are responsive to the environment; ours (African Americans) is no different but it is better for us because it is derived from our own historical experiences while maintaining fidelity in its best form to the African cultural system.

Among the constituent principles identified in Asante's metatheory are scope of context, frame of mind, structure of linguistic code, and delivery of message. These principles may be applied in developing a critical method for any other ethnic groups within the multi-ethnic American society.

Since the emphasis of this study is on the content of African-American sermons, the study focuses attention on the scope of context and frame of mind components of Asante's metatheory.

Scope of context involves an examination of the historical and current events which may provide a basis for understanding the stylistic arguments of the speaker. Frame of mind refers to the social, creative and psychological factors that contribute to the total view of language. Frame of mind helps the critic determine the narratives, metaphors, analogies, etc. which transmit mutually cultural based values. It also determines how a message is structured.
My intention is to use these principles in an effort to illustrate the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American preachers. By determining the preachers' Afrocentric perspective the writer can clarify and reveal the focus through which they attempt to see the world in their efforts to help their people survive and resolve conflicts. This pluralistic approach, combining anthropology and sociology, history, and communication will be discussed in detail in Chapter III.

Organization of the Study

Seven chapters are included in this study. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study by offering background information, a justification for the focus of the research, the questions to be answered, and definitions of pertinent terms used throughout the study.

Chapter II offers a review of pertinent literature related to the topic of this study and the methodological approach.

An in-depth discussion of the research procedures and data collection for the study is offered in Chapter III. The pluralistic approach to the study and how it has been implemented is discussed.

Chapter IV begins the analysis of the African-American sermons by establishing the cultural context of African-
Americans out of which the content of the African-American sermons was developed.

Chapter V continues the critical analysis by illuminating the events of the historic Civil Rights Movement which created the urgency for African-American preachers to speak out on civil rights from their pulpits. The scope of this historical context is also critically examined.

Finally, a critical analysis of fifteen African-American sermons that were preached during the Civil Rights Movement is offered in Chapter VI, utilizing Asante's Afrocentric ideas.

Chapter VII provides a critical assessment of the findings revealed in the earlier chapters and the implications of the research and the research approach for future studies on the rhetoric of African-Americans.

Definition of Terms

In an effort to promote precision in terminology, this work offers the following definition of terms used throughout the study.

African-Americans - I have chosen to use the term "African-American" to refer to black people in America. This term is of value because it implies a cultural link between native Africa and people in America of African descent. The term also gives some authenticity to the
notion that black people in America have cultural influences which go beyond their American context. Universal usage of this term was proposed by the Reverend Jesse Jackson and seventy-five other national African-American leaders January 1989. However, its use has been incorporated in the writings of many African-Americans social scientists as early as the 1970s.

African-American Community - is a sociological term referring to an interrelated aggregate of people who are held together by the forces of white oppression, racism, shared cultural values and backgrounds.\(^5\)\(^4\)

African-American Culture - refers to a learned composite of specific experiences and lifestyles that are unique to African-Americans and which distinguish them from other groups.\(^5\)\(^5\)

Afrocentricity - envisions one wholistic, organic process. Thus, all political, artistic, economic, ethical, and aesthetic issues are connected to the context of Afrocentric knowledge in the African-American community.\(^5\)\(^6\)

Colored/Negro - were used to describe African-American people in America during the late fifties and the sixties. Therefore, these terms will also be used when discussing this particular time frame, especially when citing direct quotations from historians and other scholars who wrote about this period.
Cultural Context - is the environment and accompanying conditions and circumstances out of which our rhetorical behavior and our response to others' rhetorical behavior are directed.\(^5\)\(^7\)

Culture - refers to a system of symbols shared by a group of people which is transmitted by them to future generations. It includes the shared explanations for experiences and lifestyles as well as the prescribed responses to specific situations that we hold in common with other people who are part of our race, social class, or other collectivity. Thus, it is the total way of life of a people.\(^5\)\(^8\)

Hermeneutics - in regards to preaching is defined as the process through which the Bible is read, examined, interpreted, understood, translated, and proclaimed.\(^5\)\(^9\)

Nommo - in the Afrocentric perspective refers to the power of the spoken language.\(^6\)\(^0\)

Preacher - is used to make the distinction that not every minister delivers sermons from a church pulpit. A minister is one who has been authorized to carry out the spiritual functions in a church. This may include working with the young, elderly, sick, shut-ins, etc. A preacher, on the other hand, is one who professes to have been authorized by a divine calling or by virtue of degree confirmation to speak in public (church) on religious matters, to give moral or religious instruction in a public
place. In many instances the roles of preacher and minister are fulfilled by the same person; however, this is not always the case.

Summary

This chapter has identified the purpose of this study: (1) an examination of the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American Protestant preachers against the backdrop of one of the most dramatic and revolutionary periods in post Civil War history—the Civil Rights Movement. The study is established on the premise that African-American rhetoric is a cultural discourse grounded in a sociological phenomenon known as a cultural context.
NOTES -- CHAPTER I


2Friedman xvii.


4Hale 269.


14Fred B. Craddock, Preaching, (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1985.)

15Mitchell 40.


23Hamilton 132-33.

24Hamilton 132-33.


30Gerald L. Davis, I Got the Word in Me And I Can Sing It You Know, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.)


33 Kelley Miller Smith, "We Seek A City," in Alfred T. Davies, The Pulpit Speaks on Race, 177-185.


45 Smith


48 Blackwell


50 Asante 36.


52 Asante 36.

53 Asante 37-40.

54 Blackwell


57 Stewart 25-27.

58 Downs 45.

59 Stewart 13.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s has been described by numerous historians as one of the most remarkable movements in the history of the nation. Events in this movement were developed and executed in order to bring about significant changes in the social fabric of American life since the Civil War.

A number of works describing some of the dramatic events that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement exist. Representative samples are highlighted in this chapter. Included throughout the pages of these sources are the contributions African-American Protestant preachers made to the movement. This chapter offers a review of some of the historical literature on the movement and the role the preachers played in it. This is followed by a review of studies that have focused on African-American sermons, the focus of this study. A review of methodological studies is also provided. The contributions these sources offer to the study will be evident in Chapter V.
**African-American Protestant Preachers**

**And the Civil Rights Movement: 1955-68**

Parting the Waters by Taylor Branch offers the most recent documented history of the Civil Rights Movement. The work presents a vivid and detailed account of the nation torn apart by the horrors of the movement. This was expressed by police brutality and degradation. Branch records how the movement brought about some changes in American practices due to the endurance and commitment of the participants. Branch chronicles the struggle of the movement from the Eisenhower years through the rise of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to the presidential campaign of 1960. Branch continues the story by helping the reader to remember the Montgomery bus boycott, the lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the church bombings, the murder of Medgar Evers and President John F. Kennedy. Beginning in 1955 and ending in 1963, Branch, as storyteller, weaves the story of a people frightened, yet determined to survive and to do so with dignity.

Active refusal to accept subordination and segregation ignited the Civil Rights Movement. However, segregation meant more than separation, notes Aldon Morris, another recent revisionist on the history of the Civil Rights Movement. In his work, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, Morris notes that to a considerable extent segregation determined behavior between the races. African-
Americans had to address white Americans in a tone that conveyed deference and use formal titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Miss, while White Americans addressed African-Americans as boy or girl regardless of their age or profession. The "colored" and "white only" signs that decorated the entrances of public places expressed the reality of a social system committed to the degradation of African-Americans and to the denial of their human dignity and self-respect. Segregation was an arrangement that set African-Americans off from the rest of humanity and labelled them as an inferior race.2

Life magazine, through photographs and vivid narratives, documented the essence of the degradation, highlighting how Jim Crow laws made humiliation a fact of daily life; and how harassment and murder by Ku Klux Klan members choked off protest. Even the Supreme Court helped to keep African-Americans down by maintaining for fifty-eight years that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. African-Americans were far from the dream of racial equality.3 However, as King so eloquently articulated, ". . .there comes a time when people get tired."4

On December 1, 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks got "tired." She illustrated this physical and mental state when she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a city bus. The African-American woman's defiance led to her arrest. The
news of her arrest spread like wildfire among the African-American community in Montgomery, Alabama. After a mass meeting in one of the local African-American churches, members of the African-American community decided to protest. According to King, in *Stride Toward Freedom*, the 1955-56 Montgomery bus boycott established the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance. Some 50,000 African-Americans took seriously the principles of nonviolence, and in the process, acquired a new estimate of their own human worth.\(^5\)

Some historians have also revealed that the Montgomery bus boycott was not created by King, but by several African-American women who were members of an organization known as the Women's Political Council. According to Mrs. JoAnn Robinson, one of the founding members, the WPC was an organization formed to fight against the intolerable treatment of African-Americans on Montgomery's buses. Robinson was a college English professor at a local African-American college and in her work, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women who Started it: The Memoirs of JoAnn Robinson*, she revealed that several African-American women, including herself, had experienced the agony of discrimination on city buses long before Parks refused to give up her seat. However, after a number of incidents like this one, Parks' arrest signaled "the last straw" in African-Americans being humiliated on the buses.\(^6\)
Montgomery's African-American population had many attributes—stability, educated citizens, a local African-American college and a just cause. These attributes enabled them to act as a kind of leaven on other Montgomery citizens. Once the WPC got things rolling, others like King became involved. This same account is repeated in other recent accounts of the movement (e.g. Branch, David Garrow, Juan Williams, and William Witherspoon).

The Montgomery movement gave rise to a new organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. According to Adam Fairclough in his work, To Redeem the South of America, SCLC was led by African-American preachers and was firmly rooted in the African-American church. Its original name was the Southern Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration. But at its first annual convention it adopted the name Southern Christian Leadership Conference. According to Fairclough, the decision to include the word "Christian" in the new organization's name was not taken lightly. Most of SCLC's members were preachers, all but a handful were Baptists. The organization's original manifesto laid great emphasis on the fact that the organization would be guided by Christian principles. It patterned its meetings after Sunday services and clothed its statements and actions in Biblical phraseology. The theme of the first convention became SCLC's motto: "To Redeem the Soul of America."
Following Montgomery, the crusade for nonviolence went to Birmingham. The African-American preachers had picked Birmingham as the scene of the next protest because Birmingham represented the most rigid symbol of segregation.

Garrow wrote in *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, that King and others believed that because of Birmingham's reputation as a strongly segregationist city, any victories that were won there, would become a Southern, if not a national victory. The city's leading champion of segregation was Public Safety Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor, who was infamous for his hair-trigger temper and heavy-handed convictions concerning segregation.¹³

The pacifist resisters put their lives on the line not only in the streets where they faced the likes of Bull Connor, but also in their own homes and churches. *Newsweek* reported that from 1955 to the early sixties, there had been eighteen bombings of homes and African-American churches and more than fifty cross burnings.¹⁴

During the Montgomery and Birmingham demonstrations there were other activities occurring in the South. Witherspoon recorded in his work, *Martin Luther King, Jr.--To The Mountaintop*, that other African-American preachers were leading boycotts, marches and demonstrations in many cities across the South.¹⁵ Hearing about civil rights
activities in one city encouraged African-American preachers to attempt a similar activity in their city.

Leon Friedman records in The Civil Rights Reader that during the four years after the Montgomery bus boycott, the main action of the Civil Rights Movement took place in the courts primarily in school desegregation cases where children experienced the pain. These court cases were represented primarily through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although the NAACP was a civil rights organization, their mission was to work for civil rights within the judicial system as opposed to the grassroots efforts of the SCLC.¹⁶

In 1960, the movement gathered force in the development of the "sit-in" campaign brought on by four African-American male college students in Greensboro, North Carolina.¹⁷

Louis Lomax explained in The Negro Revolt, that the student wave of racial unrest revealed the human passions and strivings of the students that got lost behind the sensationalized newspaper headlines.¹⁸ The sit-ins were a major victory and their success gave birth to a national student organization, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

As a result of the Greensboro sit-in and the creation of SNCC, dozens of demonstrations occurred across the country. The result was the desegregation of lunch counters
in many variety and drug stores, according to August Meier, one of the most prolific historians of the African-American experience. In his work, *Black Protest in the Sixties*, Meier wrote that arrests numbered in the thousands, and police brutality was frequent. But the youth captured the imagination of the African-American community, and to a remarkable extent, of the whole nation. The sit-ins were also effective in merging the African-American adult community with the efforts of militant African-American students because once African-Americans coordinated and carried out the "Freedom Rides" they needed all the help they could get.19

The Freedom Rides were precipitated by a 1960 Supreme Court decision—Boynont v. Virginia, which extended the prohibition against interstate travel to terminal accommodations. The Freedom Riders had as their purpose the exposure of illegal segregation practices at terminals all the way to the Deep South. The Freedom Rides were organized and led by James Farmer, president of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and a former Methodist pastor. In his work, *Lay Bare the Heart*, Farmer describes the bloody reception the buses received from city to city. There were at least one dozen freedom rides which involved over a thousand persons representing four major civil rights organizations—the NAACP, SCLC, CORE, and SNCC.20
Segregated interstate transportation facilities had been challenged head-on and a dangerous battle had been won. But, there were many more battles to be fought. Documented in Rhoda Lois Blumberg's Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle, the choice appeared to be either to continue direct action against segregation or to create a new focus on voting rights. While the issue was debated, forces were at work that would make voter registration and related community organization the main thrust of the movement from 1961 to 1964. During 1964 a major piece of legislation was passed. This was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A year later came another major victory. This was the 1964 Voting Rights Act.21

The March on Washington was a culminating event of the movement, drawing the largest number of people to the Capitol than ever before--about a quarter of a million people. Juan Williams, author of Eyes on the Prize wrote that there is no way of knowing whether the March on Washington boosted the progress of the Civil Rights Act through Congress, but one of the themes of the march centered on "Pass the Bill." The march's other themes were unity, and racial harmony. King, as president and chief spokesperson for SCLC, delivered the keynote address. It was a speech of hope and determination, epitomizing the march's themes.22
Many other events took place for the cause of civil rights. Some of these included the deaths of three civil rights workers in Mississippi; the march in Selma, considered by most historians as one of the bloodiest marches in the movement's history; riots in Harlem, Watts, and cities in New Jersey, Illinois and Pennsylvania. The Voting Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson; and a poor people's campaign was planned by SCLC with the aim of representing the problems of poor blacks and whites. Finally, King and other African-American preachers led six thousand protestors on a march through downtown Memphis in support of striking sanitation workers. King was killed in Memphis.

From the United States Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, to the death of King in 1968, whites and African-Americans engaged in a monumental struggle for African-American equality. African-American leadership was undergoing radical transformation, notes Charles Eagles in The Civil Rights Movement in America. African-American preachers were leading desegregation boycotts in which, for the first time, poor people participated in large numbers.23 From the boycotts to the marches and other civil rights activities, African-American preachers like the Reverends Fred Shuttlesworth, Adam Calyton Powell, Jr., William Homes Borders, J. T. Jemison, Leon Sullivan, Ralph Abernathy, Wyatt T. Walker, James
Lawson, Martin Luther King, Sr., and Jr., Kelly Miller Smith, Gardner C. Taylor, Joseph Lowery, and numerous others brought to the movement a vigorous leadership.

However, historians like Branch, Garrow, Fairclough and Witherspoon remind us that in spite of the high reverence given to African-American preachers in the movement, they were human and possessed their share of imperfections, including inflated egos, hot tempers and male chauvinistic attitudes. These imperfections often led to internal conflicts among the SCLC leadership and within the organization. But, in spite of their human flaws, these African-American male preachers' leadership helped to dispel the African-American church's alleged proneness to passivity in the face of white Christian aggression and denigration, wrote C. Eric Lincoln in his work, *Race, Religion and the Continuing American Dilemma*. And of far greater significance, wrote Lincoln, African-American churches and African-American preachers had convinced themselves that they had an attribute it never suspected. This attribute was power. Collectively African-American churches, guided by their pastors, knocked down a lot of walls for the sake of civil and human rights.24

Charles Hamilton, in *The Black Preacher in America*, wrote that this responsible leadership from the African-American clergy was not unusual because they have always been the race's major leaders. And because African-American
preachers have been careful students of African-American cultural forms, they have had few rivals when it comes to arousing, motivating, persuading, and manipulating their audiences.\textsuperscript{25}

The Reverend Joseph Johnson helps to explain this phenomenon as it operates within the Protestant faith. He adds in his work, \textit{The Soul of the Black Preacher}, that when the total environment conspired to rob African-Americans of their humanity, African-American Protestant preachers restored their humanity with an untainted interpretation of the sonhood of man and the fatherhood of God.\textsuperscript{26} Peter Paris also notes in \textit{The Social Teaching of Black Churches} that since African-American Protestant churches have had a prominent place in the African-American community, these preachers have been the custodians and articulators of the African-American community's most basic cultural values.\textsuperscript{27}

For this reason, African-American Protestant preachers, following the tradition of those before them, offered sermons in the cultural context of their race. They have believed these sermons to be biblically sound and theologically correct, and their congregations have believed in these cultural spokespersons and the messages they communicate.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on African-American sermons and studies which provide insights into the importance of African-American culture sermons. Although
these studies emphasize different perspectives of the African-American sermon, their underlying thesis acknowledges that the African-American sermon is a cultural art form, and provides a powerful tool for African-American Protestant preachers in relating theology to the everyday experiences of their cultural group.

Studies on African-American Sermons And Afrocentricity

In his works Black Preaching and The Recovery of Preaching, Henry Mitchell, one of America's most celebrated African-American theologians, argues that the ability to identify with the "folk," to be aware of their needs and expectations, is critical to African-American preaching, and contributing to its effectiveness in the African-American community.

Other than studies about King, very few graduate studies have concentrated on the religious aspects of the Civil Rights Movement in terms of the African-American churches and other preachers' contributions. Garrow's work, Bearing the Cross, provides an extensive bibliography of theses and dissertations which have focused on the Civil Rights Movement. The list exceeds one hundred graduate studies that were done between 1953 and 1984. Of this number, only three studies focused on sermons. One study evaluated the themes found in sermons preached by King.
study, "A Thematic Analysis of Twelve Sermons on Race Relations Delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr. Between 1954 and 1963," evaluated King's love ethic and his commitment to nonviolence. A similar study, "A Critical Study of the Nonviolent Civil Rights Rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr.," evaluated King's commitment to passive resistance through an analysis of his sermons and speeches. The third study, "An Analysis of the Rhetorical Techniques of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as Observed in Selected Sermons and Speeches," evaluated the oral style of King. Although all of these graduate studies focused only on King, they were of value to this study in observing whether the same techniques and subject matter were utilized by the African-American preachers whose sermons were analyzed. Each study devoted some time to a discussion of the African-American experience's influence on King's rhetorical style but did not go as far as to trace a cultural link to his slave forefathers.

A study on the pulpit rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement was done by John Thurber and John Petelle in 1968. In this study, "The Negro Pulpit and Civil Rights," the authors examined the subject matter of select African-American sermons on the topic of civil rights and human relationships following the assassination of King in 1968. The authors requested sermons from a select group of African-American preachers in order to examine the sermons
for key statements that encouraged involvement in civil rights activities. The findings of the study revealed that the African-American preachers were asking listeners to remain nonviolent in their thinking and actions even though King had died violently. There was no mention of the religious faiths or denominations of the preachers whose sermons were analyzed. No attention was devoted to the African-American experience and religious tradition.

This study differs from the 1968 study in that the analysis includes an examination of the pulpit rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement which involves three denominations of the Protestant faith. Also, this study focuses on the content of the African-American sermons from an African-American cultural perspective. However, the research of the 1968 study is helpful to this study in describing how African-American preachers were agents of social change during the Civil Rights Movement.

Another study, "Fabrics of History: Essays on the Black Sermon, done in 1974, approached the study of contemporary African-American sermons from a literary perspective. The researcher studied a select sample of sermons in James Baldwin's Go Tell It On the Mountain, The Fire Next Time and The Amen Corner. Baldwin made a significant contribution to the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s through his literary works which depicted the African-American experience and race problem in
America. The findings of this study offer the following assessment of what the African-American sermon has represented in African-American culture:

It is the black man's first "poetry" on this soil; bereft of indigenous forms, the sermon was his first strivings to articulate his passions in a new land. The thrust of his sermons is passional, repeating essentially the rhythms of plot; complication, climax, resolution. The black sermon is not simply an exegetical, theological presentation, but a complete expression of a gamut of emotions whose central form is the narrative and whose end is cathartic release. The black sermon has survived the assault of time. It has evolved into a discrete form, being neither wholly African nor wholly Protestant American but a mezclada of elements which combine musical patterns, folk speech patterns, sagacity and proverbs and dramatic oratorical power.39

The author's thesis aids this study in supporting the notion that African-American sermons must be crafted in the cultural context of the people.

This thesis was also noted in Gerald Davies' study, I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing It, You Know. Davies studies taped African-American sermons preached between April and June 1969. Although this project centered around an evaluation of the African-American sermon as performance, the findings revealed that African-American preachers are constantly under pressure to anchor their text in the reality of their audiences. Another finding Davies offers is that African-American preachers are intimately attuned to the daily secular needs of their congregations and to the social and political environment in which African-American
life in the United States is experienced. The environment of the sermon is the world of experience in which people live, love, hate and believe. Therefore, the sermon's lessons and illustrations must be drawn from the contemporary world and must, in fact, be drawn from contexts familiar to the congregation. These claims are supported from illustrations from the sermons studied.

Other studies exist on African-American sermons from other perspectives. But I chose to review only those studies which were related to either the Civil Rights Movement or the subject matter of African-American sermons since these topics are the focus of this study.

As indicated in Chapter I, several rhetorical critics have advocated a pluralistic approach to research and several studies have been done from a pluralistic framework. However, none could be found that were related to this study. In regard to Afrocentricity, Asante has applied his metatheory in evaluating African-American orators. One graduate study was found which applied the elements of Afrocentricity to the rhetoric of Dick Gregory. In the study, "An Afrocentric View of the Rhetoric of Dick Gregory," Ethel Harris devotes considerable time discussing African philosophy and world view. Through an analysis of select speeches by Gregory, some of which were about the civil rights struggle and delivered during that time period,
Harris uncovers elements of Afrocentricity found in the content of Gregory's speeches.38

Summary

This chapter has highlighted some of the historical documentation of the events which took place during the Civil Rights Movement. These events involved bus boycotts, lunch counter sit-ins, marches and rallies. They also involved the passive resistors putting their lives on the line for the cause. Integrated throughout these events were the roles the African-American preachers played in the movement as leaders and participants. Although these preachers were not flawless and often had various conflicts among themselves concerning strategies and ideas, the preachers who made up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference helped to knock down many doors of segregation throughout the nation.
NOTES--CHAPTER II


5. King


7. Robinson

8. Branch


13. Garrow

15Witherspoon


17Friedman


20James Farmer, Lay Bare the Heart, (New York: Arbor House, 1985.)


22Williams


35 Spillers


CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The African-American sermon is a cultural art form used not only to provide instruction in morality and religion\(^1\) but also to transmit information, release tension, promote self-growth and provide a social and spiritual outlet to African-Americans.\(^2\) It was born out of the necessity of the African-American forefathers to nourish the souls of African-Americans during decades of dehumanizing oppression, degradation, and suffering.

In responding to the research questions identified in Chapter I, fifteen African-American sermons from three Protestant denominations were selected for analysis. This chapter provides a discussion of the research procedures implemented in the study, and the pluralistic approach employed to analyze the sermons.

Research Procedures

As noted earlier, this research project began with an examination of a collection of sermons printed under the title, The Pulpit Speaks on Race. From this discovery of
sermons addressing the issue of civil rights, a search for more African-American sermons which came out of the historic Civil Rights Movement began.

Although sermons are oral rhetoric designed for the ear and not the eye, approximately one hundred African-American sermons were acquired through library automated searches, Christian bookstores and the libraries of local pastors.

Because of the large number of sermons acquired, it was necessary to narrow the focus. The following criteria were implemented in order to narrow the sample size for analysis. A justification of this criteria is also provided.

1. The sermon had to have been preached between 1955 and 1968.

2. The sermon had to be based on a scripture in the Bible.

3. The sermon had to have been preached by an African-American preacher representing the three major Protestant denominations practiced by the African-American population in America: Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians.

4. The sermon must have been delivered in a church worship setting or other public place.

In addition to narrowing the sample, there are other reasons that help to explain why the above criteria were
selected. First of all, it is difficult to attach one specific date for the Civil Rights Movement because the African-American struggle for human rights and dignity can be traced all the way back to when African-Americans first set foot on American soil as indentured servants and slaves. Still, few, if any, can deny that the event in which Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus in 1955 set the movement in motion because news of her arrest was disseminated across the country via the media and it served to stimulate massive, organized protest activities around the country. Because of the media, principally television, America could no longer ignore the plight of African-Americans.

I have chosen to end the study in 1968 because by this time and especially by the 1970s, the commitment to nonviolent resistance had weakened. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), for example had, by this time, changed the word "Nonviolent" to "National" in its name. And a small number of SNCC members had formed what would become the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. SNCC had from its inception until the late 1960s, worked closely with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the nonviolent movement, but the name change signaled a change of direction for SNCC. The violent death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the nonviolent movement's chief advocate, contributed to this decline in nonviolent tactics.
Also, the escalation of the anti (Vietnam) war protests, the women's rights movement and the students' rights uprising diverted media attention from the weakened Civil Rights Movement.

Second, a sermon, as established in Chapter I, is defined as instruction in morals and religion using a scripture from the Bible. A number of addresses and lectures delivered by African-American preachers on the subject of civil rights, politics, and education were found, which were delivered at educational conferences, colleges and universities. This is not uncommon since a large number of African-American preachers teach at theological seminaries or are on the faculty and staff of public and private colleges and universities. But because such speeches do not fit this study's definition of a sermon they were excluded, and only those speeches labelled as sermons with a scriptural reference were considered for analysis.

Finally, in terms of religious preference, the sermons selected for this study are representative of the dominant Christian faith practiced by African-Americans. The Afro-American Almanac reveals that Protestants comprise eighty-two percent of the African-American religious affiliations in the U.S. Out of this dominant faith, the majority of African-Americans are Baptists with 39,495 churches; 9,040,491 members; and 58,488 clergy in the African-American community. These figures reflect African-American
membership in two Baptists conventions: the National Baptist Convention of America; and the National Baptist Convention in the U.S.A., Inc. The second largest denomination claiming the allegiance of African-Americans is the Methodist denomination with 11,685 churches, 3,565,694 members, 12,894 clergy in the African-American community. These figures include four Methodist sub-denominations: African Methodist Episcopal; African Methodist Episcopal Zion; Christian Methodist Episcopal; and Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal.3

According to Charles Hamilton in *The Black Preacher in America*, these figures reflect the fact that the Baptist and Methodist denominations were more active than the other denominations in proselytizing among the slaves. Also, these churches had a greater degree of autonomy than other churches in other denominations, and it was easier for African-Americans to become pastors and leaders in the Baptist and Methodist churches because of less stringent educational requirements. Preachers of these churches could be "called" to preach rather than trained. A third reason for the large number of African-American Baptists and Methodists, according to Hamilton, is that these denominations have traditionally been associated with people of lower economic status.4

The third Protestant denomination among African-Americans is the Presbyterian denomination, with 400
African-American congregations; 70,000 African-American members; 275 African-American pastors; and an additional 1,000 African-American ministers. These low figures reflect the fact that, unlike the Baptists and Methodists, the Presbyterians do not openly acknowledge having predominantly African-American and white American conventions and churches. However, separate churches do exist due to the styles and race of the individual preachers, the race of most of the membership, and location of the church, etc.⁵

The last criterion of selecting only those sermons which were actually preached in a church or other public setting insures as much as possible that the sermons were crafted with a collective audience in mind and not written only for publication.

Sixty sermons met the established criteria. They were found in a number of publications. The Pulpit Speaks on Race provides a collection of sermons written and preached on the topic of the civil rights struggle that griped the nation. Various denominations and white pastors are represented in the work. The collection represented a common plea during the period that the cause of civil rights must begin at the level of the church. The book was first published in 1956. Of the twenty sermons in the work, six were from African-American preachers.⁶

A collection of sermons under the title, The Growing Edge, are offered by the Reverend Howard Thurman. Thurman
was an internationally known theologian, and as early as the 1930s had established a prominent reputation at both predominantly African-American and White American universities. The sermons offered in this work were preached during the fifties.  

In *Keep the Faith Baby!*, The Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., wrote, "I believe it is the business of the preacher to say an editorial word in a contemporary setting; to say a permanent word in a changing world; to help those who enter the doors to have not only a sense of history but a sense of the age." These words were written as an introduction to the collection of sermons preached by Powell who some historians describe as one of the most controversial as well as prolific African-American preachers beginning in the late thirties and continuing throughout the fifties and sixties.  

Powell was considered to be one of the greatest links between the Civil Rights Movement of the turn of the century and the revolutionary Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and sixties. Powell was instrumental in knocking down the walls of discrimination in Harlem. He led innumerable demonstrations that focused public attention and energy on campaigns to open up jobs for African-Americans in New York City. And he also led strikes to protest evictions and slum conditions. In addition to being Harlem's only congressman,
Powell was pastor of the largest Protestant congregation in the world, the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem.\textsuperscript{9}

\textit{Keep the Faith, Baby!} contains sermons, speeches, and meditations delivered from Powell's own pulpit or as a guest in numerous other churches scattered over the face of America. His sermons covered such topics as racial injustice, "black power," and capital punishment. He was known to refer to his messages as centering on "Practical Christianity."\textsuperscript{10}

Although he did not label his messages as such, the label "Practical Christianity," can appropriately apply to the sermons preached by King. \textit{Strength to Love} is a collection of sermons preached by King during or after the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. The collection provides persuasive explanation of King's philosophy of nonviolence. King states in the preface of the book that in all these sermons he "sought to bring the Christian message to bear on the social evils that clouded the day and the personal witness and discipline required."\textsuperscript{11} All of these sermons were originally written for his parishioners in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama, and later his parishioners in the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia. Many of the sermons were later preached to congregations throughout the nation.\textsuperscript{12}

Sermons in both the Baptists and Presbyterian tradition are featured in \textit{Best Black Sermons}. Of the
sermons offered, five were preached during the sixties. Each sermon in the work is offered by a different preacher.\textsuperscript{13}

Twelve of the sermons preached by the Reverend Manuel L. Scott, a Baptist pastor, are included in The Gospel for the Ghetto. According to Scott, the deepest need of the ghetto is the message of the church. The sermons seek to bring good news to the poor. Although the book was published in 1973, two sermons, identified through the use of language (such as the use of the word "Negro") and special references to events (e.g. the protest marches, lootings, and brutality at the hands of Klu Klux Klan members) suggests that they were preached during the sixties.\textsuperscript{14}

The Reverend Joseph A. Johnson, Jr.'s The Soul of the Black Preacher, contains some of his sermons and lectures preached during the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Johnson, a Methodist, wrote that the sermons represented his attempt to understand and communicate what the Christian faith has to say about the condition of African-Americans.\textsuperscript{15}

The sermons of Presbyterian preachers are featured in Black Preaching: Select Sermons in the Presbyterian Tradition. Most of the sermons were preached during the 1970s. However, four sermons came out of the Civil Rights movement period.\textsuperscript{16} As noted earlier in another source, this
type of conclusion is based on textual reference to specific events, people, dates and use of language.

Lastly, during an interview last summer with the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, one of the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, I was given a copy of a sermon Shuttlesworth had preached in 1957. When white politicians outlawed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Birmingham, Alabama, Shuttlesworth formed the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. This organization would later become SCLC with chapters across the country. The sermon Shuttlesworth provided me was the one he had preached at the first anniversary of the organization (Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights). The sermon had been printed (unedited) in a Montgomery publication.

From these sermons totalling sixty, one fourth of them were selected for analysis. These fifteen sermons were selected in order to reflect representation from different preachers, as well as representation of the three major denominations focused on in the study.

The selection was made as follows: eight sermons were randomly selected from the Baptist tradition since it is the largest denomination among African-Americans. Four sermons from the Methodist and three from the Presbyterian denominations, since they are the second and third largest denominations among African-Americans. This selection is
not proportional due to the fact that the number of African-American churches and preachers in the Baptist denomination more than triples the combined numbers of African-American preachers and churches in the Methodists and Presbyterian denominations. The number of African-American worshippers in the Baptists denomination more than doubles the combined numbers of African-American worshippers in the Methodists and Presbyterian denominations. The selection was made to reflect these figures.

Also, of the sixty sermons that met the established criteria, approximately fifty of them were offered by the same preachers. For example: ten sermons were from the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.; fifteen sermons were from the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.; twelve sermons were from the Reverend Manuel Scott; and eight and seven sermons were from the Reverends Howard Thurman and Joseph Johnson, Jr., respectively. After reading all of the sermons offered by Powell, King, and Thurman, all Baptist preachers, it was apparent that all of their sermons (in the anthologies discussed earlier) focused on Civil Rights. Therefore, one sermon from each of these preachers was selected. Four sermons from the Scott collection met the established criteria. Three sermons from the Johnson collection met the established criteria. One sermon from each of these preachers was selected. Scott is a Baptist. Johnson is a
Methodist preacher. The ten remaining sermons were offered by ten different preachers other than those just discussed.

Based on the fact that all of these sermons dealt with the subject of Civil Rights, I believed my sample to be representative. Also, because the purpose of an Afrocentric study is not to predict and control, but to explain and interpret, I believed the sample to be appropriate.

All of these sermons are offered by African-American male preachers. However, this study did not purposely ignore African-American female preachers. At the outset, I began a search for printed sermons offered by African-Americans. There was no date (when it was preached) stipulation, nor was there a gender stipulation. At this stage of my research, my main concern was in locating printed sermons by African-American preachers. As noted earlier, approximately one hundred printed sermons were discovered. Approximately fifteen to twenty of these sermons were preached by female preachers. However, after developing my criteria in order to narrow the focus and sample size, with the dominant criterion being 1953-1963, none of the sermons offered by African-American female preachers fell into this time frame. Some were offered as early as the 1800s. The greatest number of sermons by African-American females were preached during the seventies and eighties.

A list of the fifteen sermons is presented here.
Baptist Sermons

1. "Segregation, Discrimination and the Christian Church"
2. "Some Comments on Race Hate"
3. "Concerning Enemies"
4. "Brotherhood and Freedom"
5. "A Faith for Difficult and Critical Times"
6. "Loving Your Enemies"
7. "Handicapped Lives"
8. "A Recipe for Racial Greatness"

Methodist Sermons

10. "Conflict, Challenge, Defeat, Victory"
11. "Jesus, the Word of Life"
12. "Segregation and the Ten Commandments"

Presbyterian Sermons

13. "Golgotha 1964"
14. "When You Think You Have Had Enough"
15. "Sins of the Fathers"

This listing has also been used as the method of reference in analyzing the sermons. For example, in Chapter V the sermons will be referred to as Sermon 1, Sermon 2, Sermon 3, and so forth as they have been listed here. This method of reference is significant in order to illustrate the content of the sermons regardless of the particular religious denomination. The reader can also find out the name of the sermon, date (or approximate date) it was delivered, the name of the preacher who delivered it, the preacher's religious affiliation, and the source it came from in Appendix A.

It should be pointed out that preachers generally implement one of two methods in preparing their sermons.
Sermons are prepared either by outline or manuscript. While white American preachers generally prepare full content manuscripts which reflect their academic preparation, African-American preachers learned eloquence the hard way. Until the middle of the last century, it was illegal to teach a slave to read and write. The slaves compensated by developing extremely sophisticated and effective patterns of oral communication. More than a century after emancipation, African-American preaching has maintained its unique oral character. As a result, African-American preachers typically do not write out their sermons beforehand. They typically rely on an outline and "the spirit" which they believe guides them during the preparation and delivery of their sermons. A significant example of African-American preachers relying on an outline and "the spirit" is King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Although the speech is not classified as a sermon, it was prepared in the same cultural tradition as African-American sermons. This means that it was based on Biblical references and crafted around Biblical metaphors. It was delivered from an outline instead of a manuscript. This cultural tradition is also one in which the preacher relies on adlibbing or what African-American preachers professed to be "the spirit" within them.

In terms of publication, African-American sermons are usually typed from a taped recording of the sermons and later edited for publication. This means that phrases
denoting black English are sometimes changed into standard English or eliminated. Short phrases are changed into complete sentences with a concern for subject and verb agreement and other elements of what is considered standard English.

Although this study takes into account that African-American sermons lose some of the African-American oral style and spirit when put into print this does not affect this study since the focus here is centered primarily on topics and themes found in the sermons.

Finally, the sermons analyzed in this study are all from African-American male preachers. Although women make up at least eighty to eighty-five percent of the congregations of African-American churches, the number of male preachers/pastors more than doubles the number of female preachers/pastors. Equally significant, the influence and charismatic appeal that these male preachers have on their congregations and the African-American community at large is phenomenal and far exceeds the influence of their female counterparts. Whether the ratio and influence of male preachers/pastors over female preachers/pastors is a matter of social conditioning, African-American tradition or rhetorical style has yet to be researched. But the fact remains that African-American male preachers are a highly influential group in black America.
Methodological Overview

As noted in Chapter I, this research project employs a pluralistic approach which combines tools from anthropology and sociology, history and communication in illustrating the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American preachers.

With a pluralistic approach, the critic does not use one conventional method or tool but draws from a variety of resources. For example, one method may help answer one question in a research project. A second method may help answer a second question. Together all of these methods help to illuminate events and evaluate messages. Three tools were utilized in this study.

The Cultural Context

The first tool implemented in this study is borrowed from anthropology and sociology and is known as a 'cultural context.' Culture is something like a cement or glue that holds people together. Formally defined, culture refers to a system of symbols shared by a group of people which is transmitted by them to future generations. It includes the shared explanations for experiences and actions as well as the prescribed responses to specific situations that we hold in common with other people who are part of our race, social class, or other collectivity. Traditions, taboos, habits, and customs have powerful influences on the character and
personality of people of all cultures; however, many people are ignorant of these influences. When in a culture not our own, we may be unaware of what we are communicating by what we consider to be normal behavior. Cultural influences, however, still get filtered through personal, psychological filters. This level of influence is known as a cultural context.22

In regard to this study, cultural context refers to the environment and accompanying conditions and circumstances of the preacher and those to whom his or her message is directed. This means that hermeneutics in preaching is done by preachers who proclaim the gospel to listeners who are members of the same cultural milieu.23

The perception of experience within a cultural context is affected by the artistic efforts permitted and encouraged in that culture and it shapes the notion of truth and beauty which the culture gives its members. For example, hermeneutics in African-American preaching involves the African-American preacher confronting Biblical scriptures with some significant questions like: What is this passage of scripture saying to me about the condition of my people?; What answers to their plight may be pulled out of these Bible stories?24 And so, preachers have the challenge of capitalizing on their ability to use the scriptures to cause people to identify with its content.25
Therefore, in view of what the cultural context has to offer us in terms of the importance of communication and culture, I have chosen to examine the context of African-Americans living in America beginning with their African ancestors. This is an appropriate place to begin because it traces how African-Americans acquired their rhetorical style, one that is different from the dominant culture. As noted earlier, African-Americans are bound by a common cultural heritage and the forces of oppression in America. They differ in their ideologies in how to overcome this oppression and in their lifestyles, economic levels, educational and occupational pursuits, etc. However, the different paths individuals choose to pursue do not erase the fact that they have a common cultural background.

Historical development and tradition for a people are foundation stones for analysis—basic cues to understanding a culture. Therefore, at least a capsule view of the African-American experience in America is critical in our efforts to understand its cultural interplay.

Also, in effectively dealing with the cultural context of this cultural group, an examination of Protestant African-American male preachers' identification with, and interpretation of the scriptures in illuminating how this cultural group has used the Bible to enhance their experiences is discussed.
The Historical Context

The second tool implemented in this study is the establishment of the historical context of African-Americans for the period being studied. This is important because one of the primary factors to be considered by the rhetorical critic is the events which made it possible for a speaker to address an audience. Public address usually comes about through one or more of the following objectives: to solve problems, to gain followers, to arouse interest and sympathy, or to compel action because there is something going on in the world around them that is in need of modification or is threatened and must be defended. For these reasons, public address usually grows out of events and issues that a speaker sees as important.

Viewed in this light, the historical context is used as a tool to illuminate the events which gave rise to what has become known as the Civil Rights Movement. The role the African-American male preachers played in this movement is also illuminated since they were the movement's primary political and spiritual leaders.

It is important to note that some rhetorical theorists have address the historical and cultural perspectives of their subjects prior to implementing their selected critical method for analysis. There are some studies (e.g. Andrew King, John Thurber and John Petelle) which make important references to the African-American experience when
discussing African-American orators and rhetorical behavior. But one or two paragraphs on the subject is hardly sufficient in treating this topic with the attention it merits. Rather than utilize culture and history as prerequisites for the analysis, I have chosen to treat the cultural and historical perspectives as tools and a viable part of the analysis. I am not advocating that this perspective is original, but it is the best approach for this study.

Finally, in terms of the actual analysis of the African-American sermons delivered during the Civil Rights Movement, components of Molefi Asante's Afrocentricity are employed in order to shed new light on the content of African-American sermons.

Afrocentricity

Three broad views of cultural reality are known to exist in the world: Asiocentric, Eurocentric, and Afrocentric. These views have been formed by the histories, mythologies, and ethos of the people who constitute geographically close gene pools. 30

Asiocentric viewpoints hold that the material is an illusion; that the real only comes from the spiritual. The emphasis here is the notion of spirit over matter. 31 In contrast to this view is the Eurocentric perspective on reality. It holds that the material, the experiential, is
real and that the spiritual is an illusion. Everything that is not within sense experiences becomes nonsense. The Afrocentric viewpoint holds that all things are integrated with culture and nature. There can be no separation of material and spiritual, profane and sacred, form and substance. Thus, there exist an Asiocentric spiritualism, a Eurocentric materialism, and an Afrocentric personalism.

This view is similar to the work of David Burgest who has argued that there are Afro-circular and Euro-linear values at work in attempting to understand social relations between White and African-Americans. However, Asante states:

... neither of the realities can be considered absolute without variations, or immune to individual modifications and growth patterns. Nor can they account for all of the combinations of cultural realities that we find in various parts of the world. Yet in these three broad views of cultural reality we find the source of communication conflict and harmony among most people.

The Afrocentric idea begins when the African-American is no longer viewed as an object of curiosity but as a human subject worthy of study within their cultural domain. As subjects, the Afrocentric perspective views African-Americans as centered and can be examined and interpreted from a centered rather than a marginal position. This means that African-American discourse is to be examined from African-American values, history, and motifs rather than imposed values, history and motifs. Thus, the Afrocentric
perspective envisions one wholistic, organic process. All political, artistic, economic, ethical, and aesthetic issues are connected to the context of Afrocentric knowledge. Everything you do; all that you are and will become is integrally connected with African and African-American culture. Mind and matter, spirit and act, truth and opinion, are all aspects or dimensions of one vital process. Asante notes that the African-American view of a wholistic personality is grounded in the African idea of sudicism—the spiritual commitment to an ideological view of harmony. In the African-American view, the person must be harmonized, because an undisciplined person creates disharmony within the society. It is the quest for harmony that is at the source of all literary, rhetorical, or behavior actions. This sudic ideal, which emphasizes the primacy of the person, can only function if the individual seeks individual and collective harmony. Thus, the beginning of all knowledge is self-knowledge.

If we accept the notion that all humans are a part of an organic whole, Asante argues that it is not so much persuasion that matters when one speaks as it is the restoration of balance. Asante notes that this argument appears to be in conflict with the more acceptable Western idea that persuasion is the dominant reason for public speaking.
The overall thesis of Asante's perspective seeks to explain that a Euro-linear view of rhetoric seeks to predict and to control; while an Afro-circular view seeks to interpret and understand. These are different human objectives derived from different historical and cultural experiences.\textsuperscript{37}

Since this research project seeks to extend the theoretical base for interpreting and understanding the rhetoric of African-Americans, I have chosen to utilize the Afrocentric viewpoint.

From this Afrocentric perspective, the rhetorical function of discourse lies in the development of a theoretical frame that allows other cultures to co-exist. This is important because the focus here is not to suggest that African-Americans have a classic culture or that no cultural link to Euro-America exists. The intent is to discuss the influence of the African and African-American contexts on African-American preachers (and vice-versa).

There are several components to Asante's notion of Afrocentricity. They include: scope of context, frame of mind, structure of linguistic code, and delivery of message.\textsuperscript{38} Since this study focuses on content, the writer has chosen to utilize Asante's scope of context and frame of mind components.

Scope of context comprises the historical as well as the present moment and provides a basis for understanding
and bringing about a new language style. As used in this study, it goes beyond the historical context and challenges the critic to study the historical context in determining to what extent these situations affected the social reality of African-Americans living in America before and during the movement. Asante notes that the social realities such as time and audience create possibilities as well as constraints for the African-American speaker. Thus the speaker's stylistic arguments must correspond with the audience's experiences.39

Frame of mind refers to the way certain social, creative and psychological factors contribute to the total view of language. Frame of mind determines the proverbs and narratives which transmit mutually understood culturally based values and also determines the speaker's relationship with the audience. Frame of mind also determines how a message is structured and what form the message takes and how the message is delivered.40

The factors within the black frame of mind comprise what Badi Foster refers to as the black referents, which reflect the mixture of the African and American experience. Foster defines a black referent as "a mental backdrop composed of numerous values, attitudes and expectations that form a network derived from a community of common experiences that often is referred to as a way of looking at life. The elements in the black referent include the values
of humanism, communalism, empathetic understanding, rhythm, the attribute of oppression/paranoia and the principle of limited reward.\textsuperscript{41} Each of these referents included in the overall black frame of mind component will be defined and evaluated in view of the African-American sermons selected for study.

Although the components of this perspective are interrelated, the framework is flexible enough to allow for an analysis of language at each individual component level or a combination of components. In explaining the components, Asante notes that in isolating any part of African-American language for rhetorical studies, the frame of mind of the language user is important for analytical consideration.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, this framework is not to be viewed as a jigsaw puzzle in which each of the pieces (components) must all be used in order to see the whole picture. This perspective stresses that Africa is the backdrop in which to study African-American rhetoric; and in so doing, one can choose to study the rhetoric from all of the components, or concentrate on one of them.

The dominant question this study addresses is: What is the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American preachers? The tools discussed in this chapter—the cultural context of African-Americans, the historical context of African-Americans from 1955 to 1968, and components in Asante's Afrocentricity
perspective—make up the tools used to answer this question. Each tool is an integral and significant part of the analysis because each exerts mutual influence on the others as the critical analysis unfolds.

While pluralism offers the rhetorical critic an openness and flexibility in seeking answers to questions, there are some concerns about using this approach. The first concern has to do with how critics define the term "pluralism." Some rhetorical critics define it simply as the use of multiple perspectives. This may be perceived as too broad a definition. Others define pluralism as the use of different methods or tools which seek to answer one or more questions within a study. The latter definition was used in regard to this study. In both of these approaches there is a perceived danger of choosing too many perspectives within one study, of spreading oneself too thin, therefore causing the research to travel in too many different directions, possibly losing focus on the main concern of the study. These are legitimate concerns which I took into consideration. For example, the psychological perspective of African-Americans, particularly as it related to their oppression in America, could have been addressed more indepth in this study (the black referents in Asante's frame of mind component addresses some psychological perspectives). However, I was afraid of "spreading myself too thin," covering a lot of areas, but none of them
indepth. So, in trying to avoid this problem, I chose to concentrate predominantly on the cultural and historical contexts.

Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the research procedures that were implemented in the study. From the sermons acquired, a criteria based on dates, religious faiths, scriptural reference and performance was employed to narrow the focus. Sixty sermons met the criteria. One fourth of them were randomly selected for analysis. In an effort to shed more light on African-American speaking events, a pluralistic approach was employed which includes an evaluation of African-Americans' cultural context, historical context, and the application of components from Molefi Asante's notion of Afrocentricity, a culture-centered approach to critical analysis.
NOTES--CHAPTER III


5 Researcher received this information from Otto K. Finbeiner, Associate Stated Clerk and Treasurer, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of the General Assembly, New York, N.Y., August, 1987.


8 Adam Clayton Powell, Keep the Faith Baby!, (New York: Trident Press, 1967.)


10 Powell


12 King


18 Kemper 99.

19 Kemper


24 Stewart 30.

25 Stewart 25.

26 Dodd


32 Asante


34 Asante

35 Asante 36-80.

36 Asante

37 Asante

38 Asante

39 Asante

40 Asante


42 Asante
Introduction

What is the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American male preachers? Interplay is a significant term in this question because it implies that African-American preachers not only reflect African-American culture but also shape it. Thus, a mutual influence is being exerted between the culture and these cultural spokespersons.

This chapter begins the response to the study's dominant question by first discussing how African-American culture has influenced African-American preachers. In so doing, a condensed summary of some of the prominent factors in the history of African-American culture is presented as the artistry of African-American religious rhetoric is unfolded.

The roots of African-American culture can be traced to West Africa. It was in this region of the continent that the majority (approximately 85 percent) of Africans were captured and put into chains, and transported to America to be enslaved.¹
It is important to note that long before the ships of Europe arrived, there was a form of human bondage in Africa, just as there was on other continents. But there is no evidence that the kind of slavery which Europe was to perfect in America existed in West Africa. Africa had a subsistence economy. In a subsistence economy there was little need for money since most trade was done through barter. Because there was no money, there was no wage labor. Therefore, labor was created either through a system of domestic slavery or through a complex system of reciprocal duties and obligations. For these reasons, the slavery in existence was far more humane, since it was for prescribed periods of time, and involved no laws aimed at dehumanization. This slavery was not established by the Africans for profit; it did not impose on the victims a mark of inferiority; and it was not necessarily passed on to the children of the bondsmen.2

But, when the ships came, the Europeans brought with them their passion for profits and arms and the crippling disease of racism. When these forces embarked upon African soil, the more flexible patterns of African bondage degenerated into the slave trade. It was financed, fueled, and directed by the Europeans, and was often aided and abetted by African allies. But, ultimately, even those African allies who helped to execute some of the European slave trades later became victims to the enslavement.3
This is how the slave trades began. Attention now focuses on African culture as it existed before the slave trades and its influence on African-Americans within the context of their African-American experience.

The Pre-slavery Era: African Culture

Prior to the slavery experience in America, the Africans lived in societies developed around a world view that was predicated on highly sophisticated religious systems and an impressive oral communication style.

The African world view was based on several elements. First, the Africans believed in a world of experience based on harmony and balance between the superhuman and human communities. They believed that people were part of the natural rhythm of nature, which nothing could break up or destroy. Everything was functionally connected. They were one with nature. To destroy one category of their existence would cause the destruction of their total existence. God was viewed as the originator and sustainer of humankind. The spirits explained their destiny. While animals, plants and natural phenomena constituted the environment in which they lived, there also existed a force, a power, or energy which permeated the whole universe.⁴

It emerges clearly that for Africans, this is a religious universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon; it is
filled with religious significance. Man gives life even where natural objects and phenomena have no biological life. God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena; they are His creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence. The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible; one speaks of the other, and Africans "see" that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. This is one of the most fundamental religious heritages of African people.5

Second, most of the Africans believed in and worshipped a "High God" and lesser spirits. They considered God to be merciful, showing kindness and taking pity over mankind. For that reason He was referred to as "the God of pity," "God is kind," or "God is merciful."6 According to John Mbiti, in his work African Philosophy and Religion, the mercy or kindness of God is felt in situations of danger, difficulty, illness and anxiety. The majority of African people regarded God as essentially good. For some, the goodness of God was seen in His averting calamities, supplying rain, providing fertility to women, cattle and fields. There were, however, situations when calamities, misfortunes and suffering came upon families or individuals for which there was no clear explanation. Some African societies would then consider these to be brought about by
God, generally through agents like spirits or magic workers, or as punishment for contravening certain customs or traditions. By so doing, they did not consider God to be intrinsically "evil" as such; that was simply a rational explanation of what may otherwise have been hard to explain.  

Religion in Africa provided much more to its faithful than defense against trouble. It also taught moral lessons. It gave the individual a sense of his or her responsibility to society. In so doing, their traditional religion offered them a body of guidelines to the good and moral life. It did this through age-old proverbial guidance.  

The third element in the African world view was the unity between the sacred and the secular. Religion was the strongest element in their traditional background and probably exerted the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people. Traditional African religions permeated all the departments of their existence. As a result, there was no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, religious and nonreligious, spiritual and material areas of life. Thus, traditional African society looked for unity of the whole rather than specifics within the whole.  

The next element in the African world view was the belief in things seen and unseen. The Africans believed in spirits but these spirits defied description. People
reported that they saw the spirits in ponds, caves, groves, mountains or outside their villages, singing, herding cattle, working in their fields or nursing their children. Some spirits appeared in people's dreams, especially to diviners, priests, medicine men and rainmakers to impart some information. In many societies it was said and believed that spirits called people by name but when they turned around to see who called them they could not find anyone.11

Another important element that existed was the interaction between the individual and the group. African societies were known as tribes. One of the similarities of the distinct African tribes was the belief in tribal survival which was reflected in and sustained by a deep sense of kinship. Africans believed that the community (tribe) made, created or produced the individual. Thus, unless the individual was corporate or communal, he or she did not exist.12

Next, the center of the African's morality was the life process and the sacredness of those who brought them into existence. Africans' relationship to the future was determined by their relationship to the young. Their relationship to the past was determined by their relationship to their parents. The maintenance of this continuity from generation to generation was justification for their being and the basis on which they determined
proper behavior. The needs, physical and spiritual, of the actual, concrete human being are recognized as important, and an attempt was made to satisfy them in African societies.\(^\text{13}\)

Above all, Africans believed in nommo, which means the power of the spoken word. Nommo was believed necessary to actualize life and give people mastery over things. "All activities of men, and all the movements in nature, rest on the productive power of the word, which is water and heat and seed and nommo, that is, life force itself... The force, responsibility and commitment of the word, and the awareness that the word alone alters the world..." In traditional African culture, a newborn child is a mere thing until the father gives and speaks the child's name. No medicine, potion, or magic of any sort is considered effective without accompanying words.\(^\text{14}\)

In African societies culture was transmitted through this oral tradition. Their cultural mores, values, histories and religions were transmitted from generation to generation by elderly individuals known as griots who were considered to be excellent storytellers.

When the storytelling griots came, a quick hush would fall among the villages as they sat around the boabab to hear of ancient kings and family clans, of warriors, of great battles, and of legends of the past... In his high voice, a singing griot sang endless verses about the past splendors of the kingdoms of Ghana, Songhai and Old Mali.\(^\text{15}\)
These storytellers gave to their listeners narratives that contained elements of realism and magic in situations and characters with which they were familiar. They infused their tellings with dramatic power. This attribute appealed to the emotions; it satisfied inner cravings, cloaked signs of unrest, evoked laughter, provided solace, and fostered a temporary release from the misery of chaotic experiences.¹⁶

Thus, African culture consisted of: a oneness with nature; belief in a Supreme being and ancestral reverence; unity between the sacred and the secular; belief in things seen and unseen; interaction between the individual and the group; morality as a life process; and nommo—the power of the spoken word. These factors comprised some of the cultural baggage the Africans brought to America when they were enslaved.

The Slavery Era

During the process of enslavement much of the Africans' rich cultural heritage was transformed as described in the following passage.

When black people got to this country, they were a foreign people. Their customs, attitudes, desires, were shaped to a different place, a radically different life. What a weird and unbelievably cruel destiny for those people who were first brought here. Not just the mere fact of being sold into slavery—that in itself was common practice among the tribes of West Africa, and the economic system in which these new slaves were to form so integral a part was not so strange either... But to be brought to a country, a culture, a society, that was, and
is, in terms of purely philosophical correlatives, the complete antithesis of one's own version of man's life on earth--that is the cruelest aspect of this particular enslavement.17

During the Africans' transportation to America, their language (primarily their dialect) was one of the first overt African cultural traits the slave traders and masters tried to suppress. On the slave ships, members of the same tribe were deliberately separated from each other, thereby restricting their oral communication. Even though the Africans came from diverse backgrounds, the specific vocabularies and cultural traits that could have separated them from each other were overcome by the similarity in the basic structure of their languages and cultures. Since they were unable to use their indigenous languages to talk freely among themselves the slaves developed a different form of communication that was part African, part American.18

This fusion produced a language that was rich in allusion, metaphor, and imagery, and prolific in the use of body gestures and nonverbal nuances. Also, their communication system stemmed from their creativity and will to survive.19 Language became not only a means of communication, but also a desire for personal presentation, verbal artistry, and commentary on life's circumstances. In effect, "the slave was essentially a poet and his language was poetic,"20 as illustrated in the following excerpt from this slave sermon.
Jesus have always loved us from the foundation of the world
When God
Stood out on the apex of His power
Before the hammers of creation
Fell upon the anvils of Time and hammered out the ribs of the earth
Before He made any ropes
By the breath of fire
And set the boundaries of the ocean by the gravity of His power
When God said, Ha!
Let us make man
And the elders upon the altar cried, ha!
If you make man, Ha!
Father!! Ha-aa
I am the teeth of time
That comprehended de dust of de earth
And weighed de hills in scales
That painted de rainbow dat marks de end of de parting storm
Measured de seas in de holler of my hand
That held de elements in a unbroken chain of controllment
Make man, ha!
If he sin I will redeem him
I'll break de chasm of hell
Where de fire's never quenched
I'll go into de grave
Where de worm never dies, Ah!  

Slave sermons like this one have constituted some of the finest poetry of belief, illustrating the beauty of African-American religious thought.

Slavery established a societal condition in which the African-Americans were given a lowly status that excluded them from all of the privileges normally associated with being human. The slavery experience ensured a separate and distinct existence for African-Americans. For example, the slaves lived in separate quarters that were simple and overcrowded. Their food, consisting of scraps and portions
of the pig and other animals that were considered unedible, was rationed out. Clothing was also rationed. Even more horrendous was the fact that slave women were raped frequently by their masters while their husbands were left knowledgeable of the situation but totally powerless in preventing it. Slave families were broken up and sold like cattle at the whim of the enslaver.\textsuperscript{22}

While the slaves were being harshly treated, some "Christian" slaveowners and abolitionists were beginning to introduce the Bible and Christianity to them. In their endeavors to acquaint the slaves to their religion white preachers and slave masters selected specific scriptures from the Bible, such as the Pauline letters and the Ten Commandments, for religious instruction in hopes that these passages would keep the slaves in bondage. The slaves were told that God was not only aware of their enslaved condition but also approved of it. In fact, some of the slave preachers were forced to preach about God's approval of their lot (while in the presence of the white overseer).\textsuperscript{23}

But, no one had to read the Bible to the slaves to make them aware that their oppression was inhumane, ungodly, unjust and undeserved.\textsuperscript{24} As noted earlier, the slave masters did not introduce God to the slaves. The Africans believed in and worshipped a "High God" long before the slave ships arrived.
The slaves strongly believed that their God was a God of love, otherwise He would not have created them. Whereas manifestations of evil, such as sickness, barrenness, death, failure in undertakings and the like are attributed to malicious human agents, the manifestations of good such as health, fertility, wealth, plenty and the like, are attributed to God. They believed that they were tokens of His love to mankind.\textsuperscript{25}

Therefore, the Africans could not accept nor understand slavery as "punishment," when their only crime was being black and getting caught by the white slave traders.\textsuperscript{26} Believing that they possessed a personal relationship with God, slaves simply refused to be recipients of a religion defined and interpreted by white interpreters.\textsuperscript{27}

In view of their Christian teachings and their daily reality, the slavery experience presented the slaves with two choices: they could either resign themselves to their fate without struggle; or they could make a conscious effort at redetermining their destiny and their identity within the context of their new Western experiences. Rather than choose one over the other, the slaves embraced both, and in the process they created a distinctive culture, rooted in the African cultural heritage and developed in their African-American experience.\textsuperscript{28}
For example, as noted earlier, African religion professed the affirmation of the goodness of life and its creator. This was so deep that one of the most popular doctrines in Africa was that of the providence of God expressed in folk culture by proverbs and tales and praise-names for God. But, through the slaves' Christian orientation, they also embraced a newly discovered Jesus, Son of God and intermediary, who was born in a manger, had suffered like they suffered, and was denied a fair trial before giving up his life in cruel execution. No longer was God ineffable and distant, with profound transcendence only. The slaves accepted the scriptural references that proclaim that God made himself known and very near in the possession of the Holy Ghost. This was an experience the slaves no longer had to attribute to a multiplicity of subdivinities. It was therefore acceptable to them. However, as noted earlier, white interpretation of the scriptures as a means to keep the slaves in bondage and inferior was not acceptable to them. They could not understand how the white preachers could preach about love, yet practice hatred by keeping them in bondage.

Also, noted earlier, the center of African morality was the life process and the sacredness of those who brought them into existence. Their relationship to the future was determined by their relationship to the young, their relationship to the past was determined by their
relationship to their parents. The maintenance of this continuity from generation to generation was justification for their being and the basis on which they determined proper behavior. The needs, physical and spiritual, of the actual, concrete human being were recognized as important, and an attempt was made to satisfy them in African societies. Those needs were numerous before Christianity became a part of the African's faith. The absorption of aspects of Christianity, such as belief in the Holy Trinity, did not mean the slaves' needs ceased to be numerous. This was evident in their burial and other ceremonial practices where ancestor reverence was an important part of these ceremonies.30

It is extremely important to note that if slave preachers were to operate in the open, the safest cloak to hide behind was that of Christianity as it had been taught to them. This revelation has been documented in numerous sources (e.g. Sterling Stuckey,31 Lawrence Levine,32 John Mbiti,33 William DuBois34). In most "Christian" ceremonies on the slave plantations, Christianity, as it was practiced by the slave masters, provided a protective exterior beneath which more complex, less familiar (to outsiders) religious principles and practices were operative. The very features of Christianity peculiar to slaves were often outward manifestations of deeper African religious concerns, products of a religious outlook toward which the master
class might otherwise be hostile. Therefore, by operating under the cover of the slave masters' version of Christianity, vital aspects of Africanity, which some considered eccentric in movement, sound, and symbolism, could more easily be practiced openly.\textsuperscript{35}

Slaves therefore had readily available the prospect of practicing without being scorned, essential features of African faith together with those of the new faith. What was mistaken by whites for simple, childlike faith was in fact the product of a sophisticated African spiritual heritage which had already achieved profound transcendence over material things.\textsuperscript{36} There were, however, some aspects of African culture that the slaves wanted to keep secret in fear that if they became known, attempts would be made by their masters to destroy these practices. One such practice was a dance ceremony known as the "ring shout." The dance was a means of establishing contact with the ancestors and with the gods as the whole body moved to complex rhythms.\textsuperscript{37} For the African, dance was primarily devotional, like a prayer. It was "the chief method of portraying and giving vent to the emotions, the dramatic instinct and religious fervour of the race."\textsuperscript{38} For decades before and generations following the American Revolution, African-Americans engaged in religious ceremonies in their quarters and in the woods unobserved by whites.\textsuperscript{39} It should be pointed out that some
slaves did accept their masters' Christianity for fear of losing their lives or being brutalized.

The slave preachers were able to relate to many of the slave communities touched by their masters' version of Christianity and to those with little or no Christian orientation, the latter because otherwise they could have had no credence whatsoever among the majority of their people. Their concern was to comfort, and strengthen and guide their hearers, in a way not spelled out for them by the white religious tradition but forged in the crucible of the African-American experience. It was expressed in forms which were unique and characteristic of African people and their condition.

Because it was illegal to teach a slave to read and write, the slaves compensated by utilizing sophisticated and effective patterns of oral communication. Oral communication had been a vital part of their African lifestyle. The elaborate imagery of African-American narratives, spirituals, work songs, and sermons often contained coded messages that white ears were not to understand.

Sterling Stuckey in his work, *Slave Culture*, notes that white preachers often moved the slaves, especially at the camp meetings. But it was also true that slaves preferred their own preachers because they felt the slave preachers were in a better position to understand the kind
of messages they wanted to hear. Following is a sermon delivered by a slave preacher to a congregation of Georgia slaves.

I remember on one occasion, when the President of the United States came to Georgia and to our town of Savannah. I remember what an ado the people made, and how they went out in big carriages to meet him. The clouds of dust were terrible, and the great cannon pealed forth one salute after another. Then the president came in a grand, beautiful carriage and drove to the best house in the whole town and that was Mrs. Scarborough's! And when he came there he seated himself in the window. But a cord was drawn around the house to keep us Negroes and other poor folks from coming too near. We had to stand outside and only get a sight of the president as he sat in the window. But the great gentleman and the rich folks went freely up the steps and in through the door and shook hands with him. Now did Christ come in this way? Did He come only to the rich? Did He shake hands only with them? No! Blessed be the Lord! He came to the poor! He came to us and for our sakes, my brothers and sisters.\textsuperscript{42}

It is not surprising that the same slaves who would sit silently through sermons given by white preachers who admonished them to treat their masters and mistresses as they would treat the Lord, greeted their own preachers with several minutes of laughter, tears, the "Holy dance," and cries of "yes, yes!"\textsuperscript{43}

The slave preachers were powerful preachers and proclaimers. Theirs was a highly imaginative approach to the gospel which permitted them to see the gospel's relevance to them and their people. They read the
scriptures and retold the Biblical stories out of the context of the African-American experience and their own African culture. They also dramatized the stories in the Bible for the other slaves, and many characters and incidents were interpreted in view of the slavery experience.44

The slaves had an intimate relationship with the Old Testament and used this as a tool in refocusing their social reality. It was here that they found their heroes. They could intimately identify with Jonah inside the belly of a whale; Daniel in the lion's den; and the three Hebrew boys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were thrown into a fiery furnace. They also related very intimately with all of the oppressed "Hebrew children," seeing themselves as God's chosen people. It was this type of intimacy that inspired the slaves to create and sing songs like:

Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel
Deliver Daniel
Deliver Daniel
Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel
And why not every man?45

The slave preachers, in particular, found solace and strength in identifying with such Biblical heroes as Moses, Joshua, and David because they were strong and faithful leaders of their people. Also, rather than preaching about their lowly existence, many slave preachers preached about how the meek would inherit the earth; and how God would judge and punish the oppressor according to his wicked
deeds. They also believed that since God was free, and they were created in His image, then their struggles must be to maintain freedom.\textsuperscript{46}

It was this type of religion that challenged slave preachers like the Reverends Nat Turner and Denmark Vessey to lead slave revolts. It was also this type of religion that inspired other African-American leaders like Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Turner, and Harriet Tubman to lead hundreds of slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad.\textsuperscript{47} These individuals exemplified an aggressive religion; however, on a general level, the Bible, as communicated through the slave preachers in their services, was the means by which the slaves practiced a theology which was more concerned with their spirituality than their earthly predicament.

Many slaves were rebelling and escaping through the Underground Railroad or on their own. Some even committed suicide rather than live in bondage. However, in their church services, in many respects, the slave sermons were messages of self-containment that soothed the pains of degradation since, for the most part, they could not eliminate it.

As with the Africans in their homeland, religion permeated the lives of the African-Americans to an extent that White Americans had difficulty comprehending. Religion was a part of the slaves' everyday life, and, like their
African forebears, they made no sharp distinction between the worldly and the sacred. Therefore, the songs of the slaves, the spirituals, were sung not only during religious services, but also while the slaves were rowing boats, picking cotton, milling grain, walking home from the fields, or relaxing and socializing in the quarters.\textsuperscript{48}

Thus, the language and thought forms they employed were of the African-American masses for the African-American masses. The beauty of the language, whether in songs or sermons, gave the slaves a sense of hope and survival as evident in the following excerpt from a slave sermon.

\begin{quote}
We who are born of the spirit, should cling close to the Master, for He has promised to be a shelter in the time of storm; a rock in a weary land. Listen at Him when He says `behold I lay in Zion, a stone, a tried stone'. . . What need have we to worry about earthly things. They are temporal and will fade away. But we, the born of God have lain bold on everlasting life.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

This African-American religion taught the slaves that life at the spiritual level was real and abundant no matter what. According to some historians and theologians of slave culture and religion (e.g. Stuckey,\textsuperscript{50} Levine,\textsuperscript{51} Lincoln,\textsuperscript{52} Mitchell\textsuperscript{53}) White Euro-Americans learned from this. They did not teach it.

Consequently, Christianity as believed and practiced by the slaves became a different type of religion than what their masters had in mind for them. It was rooted in the African cultural heritage and developed in their African-
American experience. Levin notes that perhaps at no other point in American history is the term African-American a more accurate cultural designation than when it is applied to black people during the slavery era. The essence of their thought, their world view, their culture owed much to Africa, but it was not purely African. It was also influenced by years of contact with whites in America. However, it was also not the product of a surrender of all previous cultural standards in favor of embracing that of their masters. This syncretic blend of the old and the new, of the African and the Euro-American, resulted in a style in which its totality was uniquely the slaves' own. It defined their expressive culture and their world view at the time of emancipation.

In this sense, the slaves embraced an Afrocentric perspective regarding Christianity. Recall from Chapter III that the Afrocentric perspective holds that all things are integrated with culture and nature. There is no separation of material and spiritual, profane and sacred, form and substance. African beliefs and culture were the center of the slaves' life process. However, the Afrocentric perspective also allows for the influence of cultural traits and experiences from another culture to co-exist.

The Post Slavery Era
When slavery ended, rather than granting rights and opportunities as the slaves had anticipated, it merely channeled the beginning of a new era for which racism could express itself. This was achieved through legalized race segregation and discrimination, thus, encouraging the expressive oral and religious tradition, created by the Africans and nurtured by the African-American slaves, to continue.

Charles Hamilton noted that the former slaves were not given the "forty acres and a mule" as legend has it, but were left to survive the best way they could. Segregation laws and rules of conduct were passed by many states which circumscribed their lives. African-Americans had to "start the protracted process of trying to pull themselves up by their bootstraps when they had no boots to wear, and few means to acquire any." Their predicament also caused an even greater attachment to the traditional African world view that believes that the power to influence human affairs is in God, not man.

In The Negro Church in America, E. Franklin Frazier noted that the church provided a structured social life in which African-Americans could give expression to their deepest feelings and at the same time achieve status and find a meaningful existence. African-American churches provided a refuge in a hostile white society. For the slaves who worked and suffered in an alien society, religion
offered a means of catharsis for their pent-up emotions and frustrations. It also turned their minds from the sufferings and privations of their world to a world after death where the weary could find rest and the victims of injustices could be compensated.56

As in slavery, charismatic relationships between the preachers and their congregations was a necessity. African-American churches sought preachers who had magnetic personalities and were expert orators. To be considered a "good preacher" in African-American churches, African-American preachers did not need to be skilled in logical consistency and reasoning. Nor did they need to have a profound theological interpretation of Biblical events. According to some theologians (e.g. Deane Kempler,57 Henry Mitchell,58 Warren Stewart,59 Fred Craddock60), these were important attributes for pastors in Euro-American churches. However, in the African-American churches, a candidate for pastor simply needed to be able to "tell the story," and to do so in the idiom of the people. Congregations sought African-American preachers who professed to have been "called" into the ministry directly by God or indirectly through some divine revelation or dream. The congregation received a degree of satisfaction and enjoyment in listening to African-American preachers tell how and when they received "the call." Testimonies of how they were "lowly sinners saved by grace" served as an appropriate requirement
in the search for a pastor in African-American churches. This "calling" also seemed to convince African-American audiences that these preachers maintained a direct pipeline to God which set them off from the rest of African-American people. Therefore, in addition to being preachers they were also called upon by their parishioners to be lawyers, psychologists, politicians and whatever else the people needed them to be.

Concerning the importance of African-American churches in the lives of African-americans, noted historian C. Eric Lincoln wrote:

The black man's pilgrimage in America was made less onerous because of his religion. His religion was the organizing principle around which his life was structured. His church was his school, his forum, his political arena, his social club, his art gallery, his conservatory of music. It was lyceum and gymnasium as well as sanctum sanctorum. His religion was his fellowship with man, his audience with God. It was the peculiar sustaining force which gave him the strength to endure when endurance gave no promise, and the courage to be creative in the face of his own dehumanization.

The African-American church with its own form of religious worship was a world which the dominant society did not invade but only regarded with an attitude of condescending amusement. The church could enjoy this freedom as long as the members offered no threat to the white man's dominance in both economic and social relations. And, on the whole, African-American churches were not a threat to white domination. African-American churches
remained a refuge despite the fact that their members often accepted the disparagement by domination of the dominant society. What seemed to matter most during this period was the way African-Americans were treated in the church which gave them an opportunity for self-expression and status. For example, an African-American who may have worked Monday through Friday as a janitor or a maid in a school may have been the chairman of the deacon board or the assistant pastor of a local African-American church. Equally significant, the adults in the church were shown respect. They were known as Mr. and Mrs. or "brother" and "sister." One could see the people's recognition of their new identity by the way they walked and talked and carried themselves. It was this type of experience that provided them with an opportunity to experience a different reality.

Some critics have argued that this practice kept African-Americans down as an inferior race. But some historians (e.g. Levine, Lincoln, Hamilton, DuBois) have pointed out that African-American churches were the only places where African-Americans could see the potential of what they could become. As a result, they served as catalysts for change.

David Thompson, a sociologist, also points out that African-American churches made significant contributions to the progress of this group of people. In addition to fostering race pride, these churches sponsored most of the
colleges for African-Americans. They also encouraged business ventures. Not only were African-Americans encouraged to start their own businesses when possible, but church members were taught that they had a sacred duty to support one another's efforts. Finally, African-American churches nurtured creativity. Many creative activities were sponsored by the church. These included training in music, public speaking and leadership. It was here that the African-American community's talents were nourished and encouraged. According to Thompson and the other African-American scholars cited earlier, these opportunities and this sense of self-worth would not have been encouraged and fostered had it not been for the African-American churches' practice of bestowing respect on its members and teaching them to respect themselves.

In addition to the transformation in the members' perception of themselves, the pastor's sermons also aided the parishioners in seeking a meaningful reality. They continued to use Biblical and other references that the people could identify with in their own lives. The preachers often delivered the sermons in dramatic fashion, making use of imagery as the slave preachers had done. Few people remained unmoved by the preacher's message, and went away from the church with sufficient "spiritual food" to reflect on during the weeks ahead. These African-Americans believed that soul, feeling, emotion and spirit serve as
guides to understanding life and their fellow Americans.\textsuperscript{68} Recall earlier in this chapter that the heart of African religion was the emotional experience of being filled with the power of the spiritual.

These early African-American churches, or what has become known as the "traditional black church," were considered to be "an emotion-packed blend of sacred and secular concerns in which no sharp dichotomy existed." Rather, there was a sacred-secular circular continuum. Also, this "traditional black church" was grounded in an African world view where there is a fundamental unity between the spiritual and the material aspects of existence. . . Though both the material and the spiritual are necessary for existence, the spiritual domain assumed priority.\textsuperscript{69}

Since this "traditional black church" was considered to be a social as well as a religious unit, and since preachers were given a high level of prestige in the community, they had a tremendous opportunity and latitude to discuss a wide range of topics from the pulpit. During the week many African-American preachers were involved in political and civic battles for the welfare of their communities. But, on Sunday many of them frequently told their congregations that God would change their predicament in His own time; if not in this world, then surely in the next one. Their sermons, like many of the slave sermons,
provided an emotional outlet for the frustrated masses, but, according to historical commentaries, did not serve as tools for addressing their daily predicaments. These, too, were considered sermons of self-containment.

DuBois, one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), suggests that the White American spirit was characterized by concern for position, self-assertion and determination to go forward at all odds. According to DuBois, it was this typical American spirit which was so concerned with gain as to enslave people whose spirituality could still cause them to love and tenderly administer to the needs of their oppressors. This, he said, was the contribution Africans and African-Americans made to religion in America. DuBois sums it up like so:

This then is the gift of black folk to the new world. Thus in singular and fine sense the slave became the master, the bond servant became free and the meek not only inherited the earth but made that heritage a thing of questing for eternal youth, of fruitful labor, of joy and music, of the free spirit and of the ministering hand, of wide and poignant sympathy with men in their struggle to live and love which is, after all, the end of being.

Some scholars question the influence of African religion and culture on African-Americans, claiming that Africans and African-Americans have nothing in common but the color of their skin. Others have criticized African-American preachers for their delivery of life-after-death
sermons. These historians (e.g. Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson,\textsuperscript{71} Seth Scheiner,\textsuperscript{72} Horace Mann Bond,\textsuperscript{73} Gunnar Myrdal,\textsuperscript{74} Frazier\textsuperscript{75}) have argued that these factors contributed to keeping African-Americans an inferior race. Mays and Nicholson suggested that African-American sermons spent too much time focusing on life after death. Over twenty years after the Mays and Nicholson study, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was also critical of those African-American preachers who focused primarily on otherworldliness, cautioning that such sermons often have audiences believing that God is to do everything and people are not to do anything. King said:

\begin{quote}
It's all right to talk about "silver slippers over yonder" but men need "shoes" to wear down here. It's all right to talk about "streets flowin' with milk and honey over yonder" but let's get some food to eat for people down here in Asia and Africa and South America and in our own nation who go to bed hungry at night. It's all right to talk about "mansions in the sky" but I'm thinking about these ghettos and slums right down here. . . The Children of Israel got mixed up on that problem. . . feeling that it was left up to God only to lead them to the Promised Land.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

In addition to these arguments, Bond, Myrdal and Frazier have argued that no link exists between American Negroes and Africans.

In his work, \textit{Black Culture and Black Consciousness}, Levine notes that the arguments which claim that the African slaves had been totally stripped of their traditional culture and emerged from bondage in an almost cultureless
state led to the easy conclusion that during the century of freedom the African-American had become what Bond called a "quintessential American" and became what Myrdal termed an "exaggerated American." 7

Myrdal and Bond's arguments are related to the arguments that have dominated the work of Frazier, a social scientist, who summed up much of his research by concluding in 1957 that unlike any other racial or cultural minority group, the Negro is not distinguished by culture from the dominant group. Frazier argues that the Africans completely lost their ancestral culture when they became slaves in America. Therefore, they speak the same language, practice the same religion, and accept the same values and political ideals as the dominant group. 78 The major flaw with Myrdal, Bond and Frazier's arguments is that they do not provide any indepth discussions and analysis of African culture which would justify why or why not African cultural traits do not exist in the rhetorical behaviors and values of American Negroes.

In contrast to these arguments, a number of other scholars (e.g. Vincent Harding, 79 Molefi Asante, 80 Peter J. Paris, 81 Linda Myers, 82 Levine, 83 Stuckey 84) argue that careful study of oral culture reveals the multi-dimensioned complexity of the African-American past and helps scholars to progress beyond a number of assumptions that have been accepted uncritically for too long. One of these
assumptions is that African culture disappeared quickly and completely under the rigors of the American slavery system and in the face of European culture. Another assumption is that most manifestations of American Negro culture were taken over wholesale from the whites. A third assumption is that black people had little sense of group cohesion, group pride or group history, and few if any group models for their young to pattern themselves. Finally, there has been the assumption that black people yearned hungrily and unhesitatingly to adopt the culture of the majority and that their acculturation, while gradual, was taking place progressively and irreversibly. The scholars cited earlier argue that black rhetoric suggests a series of quite divergent pictures, and a thorough research of each of these assumptions will lead back to Africa.

From the first African captives, through the years of slavery, and into the present century, African-Americans kept alive important strands of African consciousness and verbal art in their humor, songs, dance, speech, tales, games, folk beliefs, and aphorisms. They were able to do this because: (1) these areas of culture were often the most persistent; (2) whites tended not to interfere with many of these cultural patterns which quickly became associated in the white mind with Negro inferiority or at least peculiar Negro racial traits; (3) in a number of areas there were important cultural parallels and therefore, wide
room for syncretism between Africans and Europeans.86 In addition to the arguments that African-Americans have adopted much from Eurocentric Americans, cultural diffusion between whites and blacks was by no means a one-way street. African-American impact upon wide areas of American expressive culture has become increasingly obvious (in music and fashions, etc.) though it has not yet been adequately assessed.87

Other scholars have also detailed the existence of a traditional African world view and certain cultural ethos which seem to predominate African-American culture (e.g. Cheikh Diop,88 Chancellor Williams,89 Wade Nobles,90 Vernon Dixon91).

In evaluating African religion, world view, values and rhetorical behaviors of black people in America, the African world view and religion offers an explanation for much of what we find today among African-American worshippers. Beginning with the slavery era, racism and racial tensions constituted the cultural context in which African-American churches and the African-American ministry emerged and flourished.

This cultural context has provided a link to many of the questions African-Americans and the dominant society have had about African-Americans. Some of these questions include: (1) Why are African-Americans so emotional?; (2) Why does it take African-Americans so long to express
themselves in conversations (to get to the point)?; (3) Why do African-American worship services last so long, and why are the worshippers unusually loud in their worship activities? An understanding of the traditional African world view and slavery provides answers to these questions.

In regard to this cultural link Asante notes the following:

There exists an emotional, cultural, psychological connection between this people that span the oceans and the separate existence. It is in our immediate responses to the same phenomena, it is how we talk, how we greet, how we style, the essential elements of our habitual behavior. We are an African-Americans without Africanity; we are an African people, a new ethnic group to be sure, a composite of many ancient people. . . And quite frankly our politics, like the expressiveness of our religion, is one often similar in sentiment to that of Africa than of White American. . .influence that initially takes shape in aesthetics and matters of style. . .influence becomes significant. 92

As a result of the cultural transformation of Africans to America to be victimized through slavery, African-American preachers became heir and have since embraced a rich cultural legacy. This cultural legacy has included an impressive oral communication system rich in metaphor, analogy, and imagery, and communicated in narrative form. African-American preachers have understood from their ancestors the importance of having an intimate identification with the Biblical text, especially the Old Testament and its heroes and have continued this tradition.
Finally, this cultural legacy has also included the natural tendency to have a sacred-secular circular continuum and a fundamental unity between the spiritual and the material aspects of existence, an interdependence of all things. Though both the material and the spiritual are necessary for existence, the spiritual domain assumes highest priority.

**Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of African culture and its effect on the religious practices of African-Americans from slavery to the period following the Civil War.

African culture consisted of a oneness with nature; belief in a supreme being and ancestral reverence; unity between the sacred and the secular; belief in things seen and unseen; interaction between the individual and the group; morality as a life process; and nommo—the power of the spoken word.

During the process of enslavement much of the Africans' cultural heritage was transformed causing the African slaves to form a different form of communication that was part African, part American. Slave religion became a quite different phenomenon than what the slave owners and preachers had in mind for them. The bulk of the slaves maintained their oral tradition and some of their African traditions. They also accepted portions of the slave
masters' version of Christianity but altered it to suit their needs. This religion consisted of apocalyptic visions, heroic exploits of the Old Testament, and a religion in which the slaves were more concerned with their spirituality than eliminating their oppressed existence. In this regard, African-Americans embraced an Afrocentric perspective. This means that African culture was the center of their life process but Euro-American cultural influence co-existed.

The plight of African-Americans following slavery only challenged their churches and preachers to provide a refuge for the African-American masses, while their oral tradition and type of religion continued to flourish. Although many African-American preachers were active in the fight for civil and human rights during the week, on Sunday many of their sermons, like those of the slave preachers were sermons of self-containment. They soothed the burdens of oppression rather than offering solutions to eliminate it.

The next chapter will examine some of the events of one of the most turbulent periods after World War II. This was the Civil Rights Movement, which had two significant accomplishments in the religious realm. First, it collectively made African-American preachers aware of their responsibility to the African-American community at large. Second, the struggle for civil and human rights presented the African-American ministry with the challenge of crafting
sermons in the context of their forefathers, but to refocus its cultural content to address the social reality of their day-to-day-existence.
NOTES--CHAPTER IV


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CHAPTER V
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The term "Civil Rights Movement" refers to activities that started in the South during the fifties and sixties, when large masses of African-Americans became directly involved in boycotts, street marches, mass meetings, going to jail by the thousands, and a whole range of disruptive tactics commonly referred to as nonviolent direct action.¹

The first factors to be considered by the rhetorical critic are the events that made it possible for a speaker to address an audience.² Borrowing from the resources highlighted in Chapter II, this chapter describes some of these events of this historic movement and the African-American preachers' role in it. This is followed by an evaluation of the scope of the historical context which will uncover the situations before and during the Civil Rights Movement and their effect on the African-American community. These effects were presented as challenges for African-American preachers in crafting their sermons.
The Civil Rights Movement: 1955-1968

The Civil Rights Movement had two main thrusts from the beginning: a drive for liberty and a drive for equality. It is important to note that the division between the two were primarily geographic. In most northern areas African-Americans could vote, their rights to demonstrate or to assemble were unquestioned, and they enjoyed relative freedom. However, injustices did exist, and African-American's liberties in the North were not on the same level as those of White Americans. But the distance between African-Americans and White Americans in the North, at least in the area of rights, was far less than the distance between them in the southern states.³

The main force of the Civil Rights Movement in the South was for African-Americans to win their basic rights as human beings. The Civil Rights Movement in the North focused on African-Americans' drive for equal rights. The events of the movement both in the North and the South presented African-American churches and their preachers with the challenges and responsibilities of helping African-Americans to overcome their lot.

The movement clearly came into focus when a petite African-American woman decided that she had had enough of the turmoils of segregation and expressed it nonverbally.

On December 1, 1955, amid the blinking Christmas lights in the downtown shopping district, Mrs. Rosa Parks, a
seamstress at a local department store, boarded the
Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks sat down
in the first seat behind the section reserved for whites.
Not long after she took her seat the bus operator ordered
her to move, along with three other African-American
passengers, in order to accommodate boarding white
passengers. The other three African-American passengers
immediately complied with the driver's orders. But Parks
quietly refused. The result was her arrest.4

There have been numerous theories as to why Parks
refused to move that day. The local white power structure
insisted that she had been "planted" on the bus by the local
NAACP to cause a stir. This theory, however, was quickly
disproved because there was a long list of respectable
African-Americans who had also defied the bus segregation
laws, thus, giving the NAACP plenty of opportunities to
cause a stir. A second theory, rumored by extremists, was
that Parks was a communist agent and that the whole incident
had been concocted in the Kremlin. That theory collapsed
under the weight of its own foolishness. The only theory
that seemed to hold up was that Parks was simply a part of
the deteriorating mood of despair and frustration that
gripped African-Americans after World War II, and she was
tired.5

In his celebrated 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham
Jail," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote, "There comes a
time when the cup of endurance runs over and men (and women) are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair." Eight years before King metaphorically described the frustrations of African-Americans in this letter to white preachers, Parks had demonstrated it on a city bus. Historians have chosen to interpret her actions as an African-American woman, tired from the punishments that came from being born black in America, whose cup of endurance had simply run over. As noted earlier, several other African-American citizens in Montgomery had experienced the agony of discrimination on city buses long before the Parks incident. In fact, a fifteen year old African-American girl was awaiting her trial for being dragged off a bus and arrested at the time of Parks' arrest. Following is one African-American woman's recollection of her agony concerning the bus situation in Montgomery:

"I sat down after the fifth seat," she said, "and the next thing I knew, the bus had stopped and the driver stood over me with his hand balled in a fist, waiting to strike me. He said to get up. I jumped out of that seat and ran to the front door and got out. I was crying uncontrollably."

Unlike Parks, many of the African-Americans who were thrown off the buses (or got off the bus after being humiliated) simply chose to deal with the abuse and humiliation and cast it off as a learning experience. Parks sought action.
Word quickly swept across Montgomery's African-American community concerning Parks' arrest. By nightfall a committee of African-American women known as the Women's Political Council was calling for action. They telephoned their pastors and other civic leaders and demanded that a boycott of the buses be called. A meeting among the African-American preachers and civil rights leaders was held later that evening to discuss a proposed bus boycott. It was agreed upon that the African-American community should boycott and it should go into effect December 5. This meant that word had to be disseminated across the African-American population, who made up seventy-five percent of the city's bus population, to persuade them to walk to and from work on that day.\(^8\)

According to King, virtually every organization of the African-American community was represented. The largest number there was from the Christian ministry. They (the African-American preachers) endorsed the plan with enthusiasm and promised to go to their pulpits on Sunday and spread the word about the boycott in their sermons.\(^9\)

Meanwhile, several female professors at the predominantly African-American Alabama State College in Montgomery were coordinating a public awareness campaign about the upcoming boycott. Putting aside the precautionary warnings about how African-American women should never travel alone at night in the South, the women, organized by
Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson, assembled during the night at the college under the pretext of grading exams. They drafted a letter of protest concerning Parks' arrest and attempted to persuade African-Americans to stay off the buses on Dec. 5. The letter, in the form of a flier, was put on a stencil and mimeographed. The project took all night, and the next morning Robinson solicited the help of students in distributing the fliers throughout the city's African-American community. The fliers remained anonymous because the teachers had used a machine and office supplies owned by the state of Alabama in order to make the fliers and, if discovered, they could have lost their jobs.¹⁰ Before Sunday very few African-Americans were unaware of the upcoming boycott.¹¹ The city's eighteen taxi companies that were owned and operated by African-Americans transported the boycotters for the same fare they would have paid on the buses ($ .10).¹²

On the morning of December 5, instead of the sixty percent cooperation that the organizers had hoped for, the boycott was almost a one hundred percent success. African-Americans either walked to and from work or crammed into the taxicabs as the city buses rolled through the city practically empty. A mass meeting was held that evening to discuss the success of the boycott and to decide if it should continue.¹³ It was decided that the boycott would continue until their demands were met by the city. These
demands included: (1) courtesy from the bus drivers to African-American passengers; (2) first-come, first-served seating, with whites filling up the seats from the front to the back and African-Americans filling up the seats from the back to the front; (3) African-Americans were demanding that the bus company hire African-American drivers on routes that served predominantly African-American areas. Those assembled at the meeting agreed that the most effective way for them to present their demands would be as an official organized body. So it was suggested and agreed that the new organization would be called the Montgomery Improvement Association. King was elected president. This mass meeting also established the dominant focus of the organization and the movement which would be articulated and demonstrated throughout their group activities. This focus was first articulated publicly by King.

Our method will be that of persuasion, not coercion. We will only say to the people, "Let your conscience be your guide." Emphasizing the Christian doctrine of love, . . . our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal. Once again we must heed the words of Jesus echoing across the centuries: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." If we fail to do this our protest will end up as a meaningless drama on the stage of history, and its memory will be shrouded with the ugly garments of shame. In spite of the mistreatment that we have confronted we must not become bitter, and end up by hating our white brothers. As Booker T. Washington said, "Let no man pull you so low as to make you hate him."
If you will protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, "There lived a great people—a black people—who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization." This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility.  

Reflecting on that evening, King wrote, "That night was Montgomery's moment in history." The Montgomery bus boycott lasted a year and established the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance and in the process, African-Americans acquired a sense of "somebodyness" and were able to estimate their own human worth. King also described the year long boycott as a saga of how African-American leaders of many faiths came together for a cause they believed was right; and of the African-American followers, many of them beyond middle age, who walked to and from work as much as twelve miles a day rather than submit to the humiliation of segregated buses. The majority of the African-Americans who took part in the boycott were poor and untutored, but they understood the essence of the Montgomery movement.  

Either before or during the Montgomery boycott, similar racial tensions and incidents were occurring all over the South. Prior to the Montgomery boycott, the Reverend T. J. Jemison had led a successful bus boycott and car pool in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth had been shaking up Birmingham, Alabama, with a series of boycotts and demonstrations. Shuttlesworth
founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in 1956, after white politicians outlawed the NAACP in the state. For the cause of racial equality Shuttlesworth's home and church were bombed. He was beaten by mobsters, jailed more than twenty-five times, and was involved in more than thirty-six criminal and civil actions.21

The Reverends Martin Luther King, Sr. and William Holmes Borders were leading a successful effort to desegregate the bus system in Atlanta, Georgia. The Reverend Hosea Williams was leading young people on marches throughout the streets of Savannah, Georgia. The Reverend C. K. Steele was leading demonstrations in Tallahassee, Florida. In the meantime, the Reverends Kelley Miller Smith and James Lawson were travelling the South giving workshops and educating African-Americans on the principles of nonviolent resistance.22 The publicity concerning civil rights activities in one city motivated African-American leaders to take similar actions in their cities.

Acutely aware of the movement in Montgomery and elsewhere, African-American preachers decided that more could be accomplished if they formed one large organization and worked together rather than each city having different smaller organizations and trying to battle racism on their own. Therefore, in 1957, the Montgomery Improvement Association, the Alabama Christian Movement in Birmingham, and similar organizations disbanded in order to form the
Southern Christian Leadership Conference with chapters to be formed in cities across the South (and later in the North). Its founders were the Reverends King, Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, and Wyatt T. Walker. King was elected president of the organization, made up mostly of male Baptist preachers.²³

Three recurring questions emerge when discussing the leadership of SCLC and the Civil Rights Movement in general: (1) Why did the leadership go to preachers? (2) Why was the leadership made up mostly of preachers from the Baptist denomination? (3) Why was the leadership predominantly male?

Historians have not written much as to why the organization was mostly of one denomination other than to remind us that Baptists comprised the allegiance of most of the African-American population. The Montgomery bus boycott and other civil rights activities in the South involved African-Americans from many denominations. However, the preachers closest to King, the SCLC president, were Baptists like himself. Accordingly, the key figures in the SCLC were Baptists, much to the dissatisfaction of African-American preachers from other denominations.²⁶

There is some documentation that reports that these African-American preachers were known to be stubborn, egotistical, arrogant and chauvinistic toward women. The prestige and multiple roles afforded these preachers in the
African-American community could be viewed as a contributing factor concerning their alleged egotism, stubbornness and arrogance. African-American preachers' alleged chauvinism toward women could, on the surface, be perceived as a mere imitation of white male Eurocentric attitudes concerning women. These Eurocentric attitudes included male dominance and the notion that women should be solely relegated to childrearing and homemaking. However, an indepth analysis of African-American male dominance in view of the African-American experience offers different answers.

One answer alludes to the impulse of African-American men to protect African-American womanhood, which originated during slavery when they were unable to protect their wives and children against white men's lust and brutality. Their masculinity was virtually destroyed. This same impulse was used to justify their dominance of African-American communities and to relegate women to the fringes in the fight for civil rights.²⁵

Another answer suggests that after slavery, economic hardships forced African-American women to seek employment outside the home, compounding their domestic chores since the jobs were usually as domestic servants in white homes. Consequently, they were regarded as pillars of the family, depriving males of their self-respect as breadwinners. Therefore, the church offered them the one opportunity to exert leadership since the clergy, beginning with the
African griots, then slave preachers were men. These male preachers usually appointed other males to leadership roles providing them also with the opportunity to be leaders although their congregations were predominantly female. This preponderance of clergymen leaders with female followers replicated a cultural pattern and at times seemed to stifle the potential of women who might have served in positions with more responsibility and visibility.  

Equally noteworthy, many African-American women believed that harmony within the movement should receive a greater priority than personal ambitions if the movement was to achieve any successes. Even though the women's movement was on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement, many African-American women believed that racism was a much greater problem for them than sexism. In the words of one African-American woman: "Black men will make a fool out of me if I let them, but it was a white woman who had me crawling around her apartment before I was thirteen years old, cleaning places she would never think of cleaning with a toothbrush and toothpick!" Other documentations express similar notions concerning African-American women's need to fight racism rather than to join their white counterparts in fighting sexism (e.g. Jacqueline Jones, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis). These are some possible justifications to the alleged male dominance of African-American preachers, all of which suggest that
there is an interplay between culture and rhetorical behavior.

Finally, one of the most important reasons the leadership of the movement went to the preachers was because of their economic independence and their charismatic influence which far extended the actual number of preachers. For instance, most African-Americans, whether middle-class or lower-class, depended on white powerholders such as landlords, employers, and bank executives, and they could not afford to be identified as a troublemaker. To oppose segregation, especially in a visible leadership role, was to invite the possibility of an eviction, loss of job and/or credit.33

On the other hand, African-American churches were and continue to be owned and controlled by African-Americans. African-American pastors' fate fell on the heads of their parishioners. With a high degree of economic independence, African-American preachers enjoyed a freedom of speech and action denied to the majority of other African-Americans. Therefore, African-American preachers have emerged as the most independent of all African-Americans. In their pulpits they could condemn virtually any social evil without fear of censorship.34

According to Lincoln in his assessment of the movement, the SCLC projected itself as a kind of council of Southern clergymen who took on the responsibility of
rallying the faithful more forcefully to the cause of freedom long championed by secular African-American leadership. SCLC was designed as the instrument for direct involvement of the African-American churches through its organized clergy. SCLC was granted jurisdiction over church-related civil rights activities wherever the need was indicated. It also supported and encouraged African-American secular leadership through its special access to African-American churches.35

Nonviolence, as it had been demonstrated so successfully during the Montgomery bus boycott, became the operating philosophy of SCLC. Addressing itself to America's harassed and segregated African-Americans, SCLC called upon them to:

... live in full knowledge of its (SCLC) power to defy evil. ... to understand that nonviolence is not a symbol of weakness or cowardice, but as Jesus demonstrated, nonviolent resistance transforms weakness into strength and breeds courage in the face of danger.36

Following the Montgomery bus boycott the passive resisters waged a courageous battle in Birmingham in the face of police dogs, fire hoses, armored tanks and state troopers.37

After the events in Montgomery and Birmingham the main action of the Civil Rights Movement took place in the courts, primarily in school desegregation cases where children bore the brunt of the hatred. One publicized case
was "The Little Rock Crisis of 1957," which demonstrated the extent to which Southern racists were prepared to fight desegregation.\(^{38}\)

Elizabeth Eckford, the courageous fifteen year old African-American girl who attempted to enter Little Rock High School (Arkansas), describes her feeling and experiences about the event in Long Shadow of Little Rock:

The crowd was quiet. I guess they were waiting to see what was going to happen. When I was able to steady my knees, I walked up to the guard who had let the white students in. He too didn't move. When I tried to squeeze past him, he raised his bayonet and then the other guards closed in and they raised their bayonets.

They glared at me with a mean look and I was very frightened and didn't know what to do. I turned around and the crowd came toward me. They moved closer and closer. Somebody started yelling, "Lynch her! Lynch her!"\(^{39}\)

The crisis at Little Rock, which threw a state government into direct conflict with the federal government, had repercussions throughout the country and throughout the Civil Rights Movement.

In the early sixties the movement gathered strength in the development of the sit-in campaign. On February 1, 1960, four freshmen from the predominantly African-American Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, North Carolina, walked into the local Woolworth dime store and sat down at the "white only" lunch counter. When told to move, they refused. The manager closed down the counter, but rather than leave, the students merely opened their
textbooks and began to study. Their silent rebellion was reported on the local radio stations. The publicity encouraged other students from the college to assemble at the downtown variety store and join the demonstration. The African-American students' actions encouraged other students in other cities to wage similar sit-ins. Many of these students had been trained in workshops on nonviolence which promoted Gandhian techniques of passive resistance. For example, the students had learned to keep their tempers while being jeered at, cursed, beaten and spat upon. Word of their boldness encouraged African-Americans everywhere. By the end of 1961, several hundred lunch counters had been desegregated.

The sit-in campaigns gave birth to a student-operated organization that would organize future sit-in efforts, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Many of the original members of SNCC were students and former students who had participated in earlier sit-ins. The students tended to be middle class and intellectually oriented, but they took the movement into the poor black belt counties of Georgia and Mississippi. In these areas they lived in poverty and faced great danger as they tried to organize people.

A year later, James Farmer, director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and a former Methodist pastor, led a group of thirteen freedom riders from Washington, D.
C. in two buses en route to New Orleans to enforce their rights as interstate travelers. The freedom ride caught the horrified attention of the nation when the media showed pictures of passengers outside of a fire-bombed bus. A new group of twenty-one riders headed for Montgomery, this time with a police escort. But on arriving, they were mobbed. Six hundred federal marshals were brought in to keep order. Then riders protected by the state National Guard boarded a bus to Jackson, Mississippi, where many were jailed without violence for breaking segregation laws. In spite of the violence and the legal expenses incurred, the rides did accomplish the intended goal and interstate terminal segregation ended. 43

The experiences of the Reverend Leon Sullivan of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, provide another example of the African-American clergy at work in the struggle for civil and human rights. Through his work in helping to integrate lunch counters in the South, Sullivan, an executive officer of SCLC, came to the realization that what African-Americans needed more than anything else was jobs. Although the lunch counters in Philadelphia had not been generally segregated, all the people who worked behind those counters were white. At Sullivan's initiative, four hundred African-American preachers in Philadelphia launched a selective patronage campaign against some of the worst offenders among the companies that depended heavily on patronage from the
African-American community but refused to employ them except as maids and janitors. The Philadelphia preachers' goal was to end job discrimination against African-Americans by exercising the power of African-American churches and the African-American community. These preachers brought an end to some of the more blatant forms of job discrimination by persuading their congregations, from their pulpits, that African-Americans should stop patronizing those companies that practiced job discrimination.44

For three years the African-American churches and their preachers were involved in a battle that remained unpublicized by the Philadelphia news media. However, the city and the country became aware of the boycott when a story appeared in The New York Times. After the story appeared, the Philadelphia boycott became so effective that the selective patronage technique soon spread to Atlanta, Detroit, New York and other cities. The Philadelphia preachers also established centers, called Opportunity Industrialization Centers (OIC), after they realized that because equal employment opportunities had never been available for African-Americans, few of them were trained for the jobs they were struggling to get. For Sullivan, the successes of the boycott were attributed to prayer, moral initiative, and African-American unity.45

Back in the South, violence erupted again when James Meredith, a young African-American, enrolled at the
University of Mississippi as its first African-American student. In January 1961, Meredith made his first attempt to register at the university. During the next eighteen months Mississippi fought a losing legal battle to keep Meredith out. Despite a series of judicial rulings by two federal judges declaring that Mississippi must accept Meredith, the state governor told his followers that he would never agree to such an act. On Sunday, September 30, 1962, Meredith was finally flown to Oxford, Mississippi in a federal plane and driven to the campus. Despite pleas from President John F. Kennedy for Mississippians to obey the law, open warfare reigned on the campus for fifteen hours. Federal troops arrived after two individuals had been killed during the riot.46

Civil rights activities shifted from Mississippi back to Birmingham where, on April 12, 1963, African-American preachers led a sit-in campaign and demonstration. A protest march by preachers was met by the Birmingham police commissioner, his policemen, and snarling police dogs.47 Through the news media the entire nation saw Birmingham police unleashing police dogs upon children and using high pressure fire hoses against demonstrators.48

The events of 1963 reached their peak in the famous March on Washington. The idea of the march was to demand jobs and freedom. On August 28, 1963, about two hundred and fifty thousand Americans arrived in Washington, D. C.,
representing almost every state in the nation. From across the nation came warnings and predictions that the march would result in riots, violence, and bloodshed, prompting President Kennedy to try to convince King and the other leaders to cancel the march. His efforts failed. However, approximately 500 police, national guardsmen, and army reservists were on hand to maintain order. But, the predictions of disorder and violence never materialized. The massive orderly demonstration took place without one demonstrator being arrested. The marchers assembled peacefully at the marble steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. Of all the words spoken and sung that day, none stirred the marchers quite so much as King's counsel of urgency and hope.

Said King:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the people's injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
This famous March on Washington was a success but it was not achieved without defiance from overt white racists as well as some militant African-Americans. The Black Muslims, for example, were adversaries of the march. One of the organization's most prolific leaders, Malcolm X, referred to the march as the "Farce on Washington." In his autobiography he wrote:

Yes I was there. I observed that circus. Who ever heard of angry revolutionists all harmonizing "We Shall Overcome. . .Some Day. . ." while tripping and swaying along arm-in-arm with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting against? Who ever heard of angry revolutionists swinging their bare feet together with their oppressor in lily pad park ponds with gospels and guitars and "I Have a Dream" speeches.52

The Black Muslims represented a major religious movement whose members believed that white, Western civilization is doomed and that African-Americans should work to separate themselves from them. The Muslims, who were not a part of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, wanted to establish a separate state either on this continent or someplace else. Therefore, the idea, let alone the sight, of seeing African-Americans hand in hand with White Americans, singing "We Shall Overcome" was farcical to them. They also believed that this Christian-oriented approach would receive neither equality nor liberty for African-Americans.
Other adversaries of the march expressed their sentiments through much stronger methods. On September 15, 1963, a bomb was thrown into a Baptist church in Birmingham. White racists had made a strong statement written in the blood of four little African-American girls who had arrived for Sunday School. The four children were killed and several others were injured.53

Then on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. In June, Kennedy had asked Congress for a strong civil rights bill to end segregation. It had not been passed when he died. The new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, addressed Congress five days after Kennedy's death, asking Congress to pass the Civil Rights Bill as soon as possible, suggesting that this would be the best way to honor the memory of Kennedy.54

On July 2, 1964, Congress passed, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed, the Civil Rights Bill. King was present when Johnson signed it in the White House. This bill became the Civil Rights Act of 1964.55

Meanwhile, African-American protestors continued to be beaten and jailed in the South. Civil rights activities in Selma and Montgomery gave renewed impetus to the movement by the courage of over one hundred African-American school teachers and other employers who marched from a local church to the courthouse, prodded and pushed along the way. There were only two days a month set aside for voting registration
in this city; and on these days African-American demonstrators would line up to wait for a chance to register. They did so in vain, and in the process, many were arrested and beaten. However, they didn't stop showing up twice a month. A fifty mile march from Selma to Montgomery was conceived as a protest against police brutality and the denial of their voting rights. They were met by state troopers and local deputies. The beatings and tear gas which African-American demonstrators were subjected to led to an influx of sympathetic members of the movement from all over the country. The day of the march, March 7, 1965, would live on in the memories of the citizens of Selma as "Bloody Sunday." The demonstrations and the killings of several civil rights activists during this period led directly to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Between 1964 and 1968 many victories as well as major defeats took place for the cause of civil rights. For example, the North began to experience some of the violence the South had become accustomed to. Riots in Watts, a neighborhood in California, left thirty-five dead. Riots also occurred in Newark and Detroit, and there continued to be racial confrontations on major white universities across the country. Many disaster were also due to poor planning and poor lines of communication among the leadership. It must be noted that preachers tend to be emotional men and women, who often think in spiritual rather than in practical
terms. As a result, they sometimes confused "God's will" with their own.\textsuperscript{59} This often led to abuse of authority, corruption or disaster. The protest in Albany, Georgia could be attributable to this type of confusion. It was considered a disaster by the participants, city officials and observers because it was poorly organized and executed.

Toward the middle of the sixties, a fissure developed in the movement. The nonviolent direct action approach was overshadowed by an evolving black power philosophy among some of the activists. Black power represented a nationalist, revolutionary ideology which rejected White American culture and paralleled the nationalist movements of formerly colonized people abroad. Its proponents believed that racism could not be removed from society and that African-Americans needed unity and self-pride, communicated in the form of self-defense, to attain their share of the American Dream.\textsuperscript{60}

In 1968, a march led by King in Memphis turned into a riot. Seven days later, King was killed in Memphis. Widespread rioting led to thirty-nine deaths and fourteen thousand arrests. The most serious outbreaks occurred in Washington, Baltimore, Chicago, and Kansas City.\textsuperscript{61}

The death of the movement's leader and spokesperson caused an even greater deterioration in nonviolent resistance. By the end of the sixties African-Americans were disillusioned and less optimistic about the value of
continued peaceful demonstrations. The movement was now fragmented and decentralized, weakening its overall impact. Ideologies competed and the media found the black power movement more newsworthy and exciting than the message of nonviolence. But the violent events of the late sixties and the many directions of the Civil Rights Movement cannot cloud the accomplishments made by the men and women who rewove the fabric of American society, led by courageous people, many of whom were African-American preachers.

The Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968), with all of its successes and failures, was considered to be the most dramatic movement in post Civil War history. This chapter has discussed many of the events of the movement and the leaders who initiated and executed them. The remainder of this chapter provides a discussion of the scope of the historical context. This means that the discussion will focus on the extent to which these situations affected the social reality of African-Americans before and during the movement. This is significant because an understanding of the scope of the context helps to establish the challenges African-American audiences presented their preachers in leading them.

Scope of Context

Numerous histories have been written about the Civil Rights Movement and accounts about the African-American
experience before and during this movement. From these sources, it seems appropriate to conclude that African-Americans during the turn of the century, and continuing throughout the fifties and the sixties lived in a state of constant humiliation, frustration, and the denial of their growth as individuals and as a race of people.

Growth is a necessary aspect of life and a society that would prohibit growth in individuals or a race of people, nurtures this feeling of low self-esteem. This notion of "second-class citizenship" and inferiority among African-Americans has persisted in America, from one generation to another, and is firmly rooted in an ideology that says African-Americans are subhumans. This ideology has been nourished through America's long history of segregation manifested in its school systems, housing areas, transportation system, hotels and restaurants and the workplace. In addition to segregation laws and other restrictions forced on them, there were other problems. These included the fear of walking the streets during the day and especially at night. Their homes were subject to being searched without warrants. If arrested, African-Americans were usually beaten. They were denied access to the polls in some areas; and if they received a "just" day in court it was usually when all parties concerned were African-Americans so it didn't matter to the judge or jury which party was innocent or guilty.
African-Americans' dignity as a race of people was not permitted, and their worth was so demeaned that even other minorities had little respect for them.

No historian or other scholar has described more vividly the African-American experience in America during this period than did King in his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." King wrote:

When you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored;" when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John" and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodyness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.63

Even children, who were not quite sure of what was going on, were affected by the situation. They, too, had a sense of inferiority. This was revealed in the highly publicized doll test conducted by African-American psychologist, Kenneth Clark. Before the landmark Brown v. the Board of Education case, Clark and his wife tested the effects of segregation on several African-American children in both the North and South. The children, aged six to nine, were asked to respond to questions regarding two dolls, one white, the other black. The tests revealed that the children who attended segregated schools in the South
had lower self-esteem than the children in integrated schools in the North. Recall earlier in this chapter that northern cities were not as segregated as cities in the South. African-Americans in the North had experienced more social freedom than African-Americans in the South. The southern African-American children liked the white doll better and said they looked nicer. They thought the black doll was ugly and did not want to play with it. The most disturbing question posed was: "Which doll is the most like you?" This question was disturbing because, in his analysis, Clark reported that many of the children became emotionally upset when they had to identify with the black doll they had rejected. These children saw themselves as inferior and they had accepted the inferiority as part of their reality, Clark wrote.

Even though civil rights activities sought to bring about a change in African-Americans' realities, the activities created several barriers. For instance, they were putting their jobs in jeopardy if they were seen (by their employers) participating in civil rights activities. As noted earlier, they were subjected to other white powerholders in the forms of landlords, bankers, store owners, etc. Their open commitment to protest activities could have also caused them to lose their homes and credit. They were not even safe in church since many African-American churches were bombed during Sunday morning worship
services and weeknight activities. Their homes were also subject to bombings by extremists; and cross burnings were commonplace.

African-American preachers and other civil rights workers also had to change the thinking of many African-Americans, mostly the elderly, who were satisfied with the status quo. Many of these elderly African-Americans had grown up as the children of slaves or indentured servants and could not conceive of any other type of reality than being second-class citizens because that was all they knew. Therefore, they resented King and other civil rights leaders coming into their towns "stirring up trouble."

This is a very bleak picture of the social reality of African-Americans during the turn of the century and continuing throughout the fifties and sixties. It was not purposely written to be bleak; yet it is an accurate picture. To date, I have not discovered any sources that have painted an otherwise, more pleasant picture of the African-American experience during this particular time frame.

In view of these situations and the attitudes that accompanied them, the fifties and sixties presented significant challenges for African-American preachers. In the rhetorical perspective, these challenges may be considered as constraints. Constraints may be viewed as persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of
the situations because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify imperfections. Sources of constraints include beliefs, attitudes, images, facts, traditions, motives, and the like.65

In addition to the move obvious goals of knocking down legal doors for African-Americans, an equally critical challenge for African-American preachers was helping their people maintain their dignity and sense of "somebodyness." These fears challenged the African-American preachers to return, for the most part, to some of the survival techniques of the African slave preachers, such as an intimate identification with Old Testament heroes and other references in the Bible. However, it was during the Civil Rights Movement that the cultural content of African-American religion was refocused to a more aggressive religion on a national level. (It is important to stress "on a national level" because some African-American preachers like Powell were already communicating this type of religion in the North as early as the 1930s.) This "refocused religion" was expressed in the SCLC mass meetings and began to be communicated in individual African-American churches. The change in the religious content meant:

A religion true to its nature must also be concerned about man's social conditions. . . Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of man and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion.66
A refocusing of the cultural content was necessary in order to get people involved in the movement as well as to lift their individual and collective self-esteem. It was considered a social gospel.

**Summary**

The late fifties and the sixties was a time of unrest and turmoil. Beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, many events occurred for the cause of civil rights. This chapter has focused on some of them. Equally significant, African-American preachers played a significant role in motivating other African-Americans to participate in the movement, in organizing and leading them. Their leadership outside of the church wall involved organizing and participating in marches, boycotts, sit-ins and other demonstrations. From the pulpit they maintained a social gospel movement grounded in the cultural context of their forefathers but refocused in the social reality of their day.
NOTES—CHAPTER V


3 Newsweek


7 William Roger Witherspoon, Martin Luther King, Jr... To the Mountaintop, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985), 19.

8 Williams 60-89.


10 Williams

11 King

12 Williams 72.

13 King

14 Lomax 82-83.

15 King 43-52.

16 King
17King
18King
19Williams 60.
20Witherspoon 46.
21Morris
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23Adam Fairclough, To Redeem the Soul of America, (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1987.)
24Lomax 92-3.
26Jones
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33Fairclough 14.
35C. Eric Lincoln


39 Friedman 163-6.

40 Lomax 121-31.


43 James Farmer, Lay Bare the Heart, (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 1-32; 195-207.


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50 Ira Peck, The Life and Words of Martin Luther King, Jr., (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968), 65-75.

51 Peck


53 Peck 72.

54 Peck

55 Peck

56 Blumberg 113.

57 Williams 273-287.
58 Friedman
59 Lomax 87.
60 Blumberg
61 Friedman 85-106.
62 Blumberg 163-6.
64 Williams 21-23.
66 King 36.
CHAPTER VI
THE SERMONS

Introduction

In view of the scope of the historical context of African-Americans before and during the Civil Rights Movement, African-American preachers were presented with two challenges: (1) motivating their audiences to become involved in the movement; (2) teaching them how to love themselves as a race of people.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the cultural content of select African-American sermons preached during the Civil Rights Movement. In so doing, this study maintains that the African-American Protestant preachers utilized a frame of mind that embraced an Afrocentric perspective in responding to their audience's social reality.

It should be pointed out again that the focus here is not to assess whether the sermons were positive or negative, effective or ineffective in promoting social change in America. From reading this chapter and evaluating the social conditions in America as they existed for African-Americans prior to and following the historic Civil Rights
Movement, the reader can form his or her own opinion concerning the value of the sermons. The emphasis here is to bring to the readers' attention the fact that these were the types of African-American sermons that were communicated during the Civil Rights Movement by Protestant male preachers. This chapter also critically discusses why these types of sermons were preached.

Each sermon in the chapter is referred to by the number assigned to it in Chapter III and Appendix A. Also, recall from Chapter III that each of the sermons was developed from one or more scriptural references, a major criterion for analysis. The reader can refer to the specific Bible text in Appendix B, which list the sermon title and the scriptures from which the sermon was developed. Following this analysis of African-American sermons, the remainder of the chapter will analyze the Afrocentric components that governed the content of the sermons.

The Cultural Content

It was during the Civil Rights Movement that the cultural content of Protestant African-American religion was refocused to a more aggressive religion on a national level. Some African-American Protestant preachers were already communicating this type of religion in the North prior to the movement, but a national Christian-based organization
like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference gave this type of religion greater force.

As noted earlier, a refocusing of the cultural content was necessary in order to get people involved in the movement as well as to lift their individual and collective esteem. Also, recall in the previous chapters that the early African-American preachers were more concerned with their spirituality than their earthly predicament. Consequently, the refocusing of the religious content was a social gospel rather than a gospel of containment. A social gospel implies a religion that is practical, that its followers can apply to their day-to-day existence. The SCLC, through this social gospel, sought to raise the consciousness of the African-American community. On a general level, this consciousness raising focused on changing African-Americans' level of esteem as a race of people, and in helping them to develop an attitude that was conducive to social protest.

An examination of the fifteen African-American sermons revealed that African-American Protestant preachers during the late fifties and the sixties sought to encourage, sustain and promote civil and human rights to their audiences through three dominant themes: (1) involvement in the struggle for equality; (2) a universal love for all mankind; (3) individual and collective esteem as members of the African-American race. Nine of the fifteen sermons
focused on the first theme. Six of the sermons focused on the second theme. Eight of the sermons focused on the third theme. It is evident from these figures that six of the sermons focused on more than one theme. Each theme is discussed with excerpts offered from the sermons selected for study.

Involvement in the Civil Rights Movement

The first theme identified in the African-American sermons focused on getting African-Americans involved in the movement. This was a very important theme because the successes of civil rights activities could not have been achieved had it not been for the thousands of common people putting their livelihoods on the line for the sake of equality. Successful social movements usually comprise people who are willing to make sacrifices for the cause. In motivating their audiences to get involved in the movement, one of the strategies African-American Protestant preachers used was to persuade the audiences that it was their Christian duty to protest.

Sermon 4 for example, provides a brief synopsis of the contributions African-Americans have made in the founding and development of America and argued, "...it is not so important to impress ourselves and others that we had a hand in building this civilization, as it is that we lend a hand in saving this civilization." The preacher also argued that
racial conflicts, class contradictions and moral dilemmas
have broken this country and those in it from their
democratic ideals, and headed toward disaster. "What can the
Negro do? What prospects are there for Negroes to turn the
tide in this turmoil of human progress and social
evolution?" the preacher asks. He responds, "Nagasaki and
Hiroshima have bequeathed 'We ain't gonna study war no
more,' the Negro church must undertake the saving of
mankind." His message is very direct. African-Americans
and white Americans will either cooperate as comrades or
they will perish together as foes.

Sermon 12, also persuades people to get involved by
attempting to convince them that it was their Christian
duty. In the sermon the preacher teaches them how
segregation laws violate God's laws for humanity expressed
in the Ten Commandments. Recall in Chapter IV that during
the slavery era, the Ten Commandments were used by white
preachers and slave masters to convince them that God
approved of their predicament. The preacher illustrates how
segregation breaches each of the Ten Commandments drawing
upon examples from the civil rights struggle for
clarification. For example, he argues:

Segregation breaches the sixth commandment:
"You shall not kill." It kills the noblest
impulses in man. As Jesus so clearly saw, you
can kill men without taking up the sword against
them. The vitriolic tongues or pens of angry
little men can be just as murderous as the sword
or bomb in the hands of a maniac. If Mr. and
Mrs. Alexander Looby had been killed in the
explosion that rocked Nashville who would have been responsible for their murder? A lot of people would have been responsible for their murder. The jails of Nashville could not begin to accommodate all the people who helped to set the stage for that crime. A whole host of Nashvillians aided and abetted the men who threw that bomb. All of us who have in any way insulted Negroes—we as well as the droppers of the bomb, would have been guilty of this crime.

This preacher also argues that segregation has betrayed people into bearing false witness about both races. It (segregation) has betrayed white people into thinking that they deserved to have certain advantages over African-Americans, the preacher argues. It (segregation) has also betrayed African-Americans into thinking that they are inferior.

Segregation breaches the ninth commandment: "You shall not steal." It robs the white man, and it robs the Negro. It robs the white man of a change to discover that it is not the race but the segregation of the Negro that keeps him, in all too many of his places, in slums and poverty. It robs him of a chance to discover that beneath the skin Negroes and whites share a common humanity: They rejoice alike at birth; they weep alike at death; they suffer alike in pain; they hope alike in marriage; and they dream alike as parents. But what segregation steals from the Negro, as pointed out in the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, is much more basic and elementary. It robs him of equal access to public facilities. It robs him of equal access to educational opportunities. It robs him of equal access to decent housing in good neighborhoods. It robs him of equal access to a typical workweek and favorable working conditions. It robs him of equal access to hospital facilities. It robs him of the respect and dignity due him as a human being.
The sermon is crafted in such a way as to motivate African-Americans to seek and capture what is rightfully theirs.

The future of desegregation depends on our point of departure in times of crisis. How we answer the questions, "When do we start?" and, "How fast do we travel?" will hinge largely on the authority from whom we take our orders. If we take our cues from our neighbors' prejudices we shall move slowly and in all probability in the wrong direction at the wrong time, if we take our cues from God's commandments who among us would dare answer, "Be patient, Lord, and I'll do what you say, but not here and not yet." It may be later than we think. This may be the hour for the tribe of Elijah to rise up and say to this generation: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If Jesus Christ is Lord follow him; but if Jim Crow, then follow him."

Along these same lines, many African-American Protestant preachers communicated that oppression is sinful and that God approves of protest aimed at eliminating social evils. Therefore, God approved of their desire to boycott, demonstrate, and march. But their efforts must be based on Christian principles. The Christian principles which guided their thinking involved scriptural references which were based on loving one's enemies, rejecting violence and putting God first in all undertakings.

Sermons 1, 11 and 13 were crafted along this train of thought. In Sermon 1 the preacher proclaims:

The very spirit and practice of all citizens in this great country must be to induce by law, to mold by custom, to instill by education, and to inspire by religion a society that will not permit the inhibition joy the God-given potentialities of any individual. The Christian
church must keep herself in the vanguard of leadership in the fight for freedom of all God's children. With Christian love, we must put to fight the demagogues, the rabble-rousers, the crackpots, and the bigots who turn their freedom into license to peddle a spleen of racial division and racial hate based on color.

We note with admiration and a sense of indebtedness the significant works of W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, A. Phillip Randolph, Charles S. Johnson, and Mardica Johnson. We praise God for the excellent services rendered to the black youth of this nation by the black educational institutions in preparing these young Blacks so that they could take their place in the mainstream of American life.

Why, then, the cry for gradualism as the American Negro emerges in his fight for first-class citizenship? Why ask him to be gradual? Why ask him to wait? Crispus Attucks did not wait at the Boston Common. He rushed forth with courage and with love of country to be the first to spill blood in the American Revolution. The thousands of Negro soldiers who fought in the Civil War did not wait. As Frederick Douglass prodded the government and traveled from one section of the nation to another, men of color rallied to the call of the Union and fought bravely to save the integrity of America.

Sermon 13:

In the mission of the church morality cannot be selective, ethical concern cannot be partial, zeal for freedom, equality, and justice cannot be conditioned by considerations of class or ethnic origins. Neither can Christians in America "play safe" or compromise on the issues of racial segregation and discrimination in this country, in our own communities and churches, without losing spiritual insight and moral courage so necessary for a sincere and genuine witness in the total world community.

The mission of the church in America and in the world is indivisible. There is an underlying unity in life which is violated whenever offense is done to any segment of life. The yearning of the human spirit is not merely
for houses and jobs and food and schools and votes, but basically for affirmation of worthfulness and identification with fellow human beings in all the high endeavors for fullness of life. The church is called to incarnate this ideal and to lead the way in America and to the end of the earth.

Sermon 11:

In 1770 Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave, cried, "Do not be afraid," and later fell dead on the frozen ground of Boston Common, the first to die for independence. Benjamin Banneker, the mathematical wizard and inventor, and David Walker, the fighter for freedom, who declared, "I will stand my ground. Somebody must die in this cause. I may be doomed to the stake and fire or to the scaffold tree but it is not in me to falter if I can promote the work of emancipation." Denmark Vesey, the anti-slavery insurrectionist, Nat Turner, anti-slavery revolutionist and William Still, underground railroad leader, were witnesses, Harriet Tubman, called the Black Moses of her race, Sojourner Truth, a "pilgrim of freedom," and Frederick A. Douglass, the golden trombone of abolition, followed the lead of Jesus, the Liberator. Norbert Rillieux, slave scientists, George Washington Carver, "savior of southern agriculture," Daniel Hale Williams, heart surgeon, Ernest E. Just, biologists, and Charles Drew, who was a pioneer in blood plasma research, were on the case. And what more shall we say? For time would fail us to tell you about Robert S. Abbott, Martin de Porres, William H. Miles, Richard Allen, John Hope, Marcus A. Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Martin Luther King Jr., "who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness. . .of whom the world was not worthy (Heb.11:33-34a, 38)."

Sermon 9 centers on the belief that African-Americans represent the nation's biggest paradox, a contradiction of achievements and limitations. To illustrate, the preacher
highlights some of the achievements African-Americans have made, such as George Washington Carver's contributions to Southern agriculture. "Is it not a strange commentary on any society that a man can be named the 'Man of the Year' for having made the outstanding contribution to the basic occupation of his community—and in that same community be denied the right to eat in a restaurant, sleep in a hotel, ride in a first class seat, or even to cast the vote of his citizenship? the preacher asks. The preacher cites other contributions African-Americans have made to American society. According to the preacher:

But the newest resources lies in the Negro American's new purpose and new courage. He has lost his fear. In his quest for freedom, in revolt against second-class citizenship, the Negro American is probably making his greatest contribution to America and to democracy in his astonishing drive to widen the straitened channels defined by race discrimination. Uncounted Negroes joined very often by their white brethren and sisters, some eminent and some nameless of both races, have converged in a multiplicity of gallant assaults upon the ramparts of race discrimination. They have ridden buses, sat at lunch counters, waded at beaches, registered at polling places, applied at universities, knelled in churches and instituted proliferate litigation in the most virile and protracted attack upon inequality of opportunity our century, if not history, has seen. With Spartan fortitude they have braced themselves to withstand any torture may invoke, and they have announced the unwavering quality of their commitment by the unfaltering chant, "We Shall Overcome."

The Biblical disciple Peter is used as an example in Sermon 10 as one who had many successes and failures yet he
didn't give up in his struggles. In this sermon, the preacher argues that "life is a tempestuous affair and the contrary winds take many forms—chronic ill health, poorly rewarded labor, frustrated ambitions, and ruthless oppression." But through faith in God, one can get through any struggle. Thus, the preacher is also attempting to motivate people to get involved.

The challenge of Peter is met by the challenge of Jesus, "Come." The heart of Jesus is thrilled by the man who is prepared to take great risks for him and in his name. He demands of his followers that they give all of themselves to him, to love God with all of their heart, mind, and strength. In the eyes of Jesus the great men and women are those who have flung everything out of her poverty, the merchant who sold all that he had in order to make the supreme purchase, and Peter who leaves his friends in the security of the boat and takes the risk of coming to Jesus, the Liberator on the waters. This is faith in its most profound meaning. It is faith which involves seeing and following, intuition and courage. Peter believed that Jesus Christ was out there on the waters beyond him, out there on the crest of those rough waters, waiting to welcome him. He was sure that he heard his Liberator's voice and certain that he had seen his form. He takes the leap into dark, knowing that in that darkness he will find the Light of the world. We must remember that faith is the faculty by which we tap the unlimited resources of God. The limits of faith are set not by our strength but by your willingness to appropriate the inexhaustible power of God.

Sermon 14 is interesting in that it is directed toward those individuals who may already be involved in the movement but need to be encouraged to continue participating. The African-American preacher foresees that
people may be discouraged and just plain tired of marching, holding signs, boycotting stores, and other civil rights activities. So the preacher encourages the audience to keep striving until they, as a people, get what they want.

When you think you have had enough, just tell yourself that you can take a little bit more. Some will say this all seems too naive. For people who have been waiting so long for a better day, this is understandable. We must live with a long-term faith. Of course, we would like to see things happen now. All of us want to achieve our goals, realize our dreams while we are here on earth. We must not let a temporary setback stop us. We must keep on keeping on! We must undertake great adventures and challenge others to do the same. Our dreams for justice, equality and true freedom must remain alive!

Finally, Sermon 5 not only focuses on getting African-Americans involved in the movement, but the preacher stresses that the focus of the protest is segregation laws and not white people. In other words, one can learn to hate the sin (segregation) without hating the sinner (segregationist).

As long as the Negro is docile, quiet, and "in his place," back doors, back seats and segregated facilities, the Negro's counterpart will be sweet and kind. But once in a front seat or First Class facility this same friend becomes a raging enemy. Segregation is the enemy and segregation laws are what the Negro will be fighting.

Universal Love and Nonviolence

The second theme communicated in the black sermons was the idea of practicing a universal love for humankind. This
theme involved a commitment to Christian principles in hopes of creating an "ideal society" in which people could live together in freedom and in peace. The theme also involved an acceptance of nonviolence as a way to resolve conflicts. For these reasons, communicating a "love ethic" was a creative strategy implemented in the sermons during the Civil Rights Movement in hopes of controlling hate and bloodshed between the two races, as illustrated in Sermon 6.

In this sermon the preacher proclaims that people are travelling in the direction of destruction and damnation. Love, even for enemies, is the key to the solution of the problems of the world. The sermon is further developed from the preacher's formula for how to love one's enemies.

First, he argues, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. Forgiveness, the preacher notes, means that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship. Second, the preacher stresses that we must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is. An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy. Third, we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy but to win his friendship and understanding. Finally, we must love our enemies because hate scars the soul and distorts the personality. The sermon concludes by arguing that there will be no permanent solution to the race problem until
oppressed men (and women) develop the capacity to love their enemies.

There will be no permanent solution to the race problem until oppressed men develop the capacity to love their enemies. The darkness of racial injustice will be dispelled only by the light of forgiving love. For more than three centuries American Negroes have been battered by the rod of oppression, frustrated by day and bewildered by night by unbearable injustice, and burdened with the ugly weight of discrimination. Forced to love with these shameful conditions, we are tempted to become bitter and to retaliate with a corresponding hate. But if this happens, the new order we seek will be little more than a duplicate of the old order. We must in strength and humility meet hate with love.

Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of our Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind's quest for peace and security.

Audiences were therefore instructed to adopt a lifestyle that reflected Christianity and a commitment to the universality of human rights and justice, and to do it with dignity and self-respect, as evident in Sermon 3.

This sermon was preached following the Mississippi lynching of a fourteen year old African-American youth during the summer of 1955. The youth was lynched by white men because he allegedly spoke to a white woman. The two white men who claimed responsibility for the child's death were acquitted in a highly publicized trial. The sermon focuses on dealing with political and social enemies.

In the sermon the preacher warns against the danger of allowing hate to take control of one's mental state because
it would lead to destruction of the body. He also warns against losing one's temper and of saying things one ordinarily would not say and of doing things one ordinarily would not do. "It must also be observed that every person does belong to the human family, to the family of God. No deed that he does, therefore, however awful it may be, is completely indicative of all that there is to him and in him," the preacher advised.

Now I am perfectly willing to apply that judgment to myself; to say that the thing I did to you was terrible but that I wasn't altogether present and accounted for in the deed; that some margin of me was unexpressed and that my real self was not in all this. Jesus recognizes that every man is caught in the limitation of his own kind of predicament.

The preacher continues by reinforcing a passage in the Bible which says "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." He also reminds the listeners that God said "Vengeance is mine," and that loving your enemies fulfills the will of God.

A man cannot love his enemy until he is able to restore his enemy to good standing in the human family. He may pray for him, may serve him, he may flagellate himself in atonement because he cannot like the man; he may respond with retaliation and resentment and hostility. But he can't love him until emotionally he is able to get him outside a context that binds him and defines him. He must recognize him as a child of God, as a member of the family of God. That is why loving one's enemy demands an insight that is more religious than ethical and moral.
Sermon 13 focuses on the universal love principle from the viewpoint that the church as a collective must do more than it has done in the past.

The testimony of the church at one point on the globe conditions its capacity for revealing and mediating the love of God at any point on the globe. If fear, prejudice, and arrogance have rendered the church in America incapable of being the redeeming society in which black Americans share its full life in decency, quality, and full community, then it is unlikely that a spirit so distorted can bring health and healing to that which is deepest in the hearts of black, brown, red, yellow people in any part of the world. Charity, humanitarian services, and passionate evangelism may bring temporary relief and a measure of hope in persons in distress and physical anguish. But love that knows no bounds, that enriches our companionship with every child of God, is the only power that touches one's deepest yearning, the only force that reaches one's deepest need.

Sermon 15 is unique in this study because it is far more logically crafted than any of the other sermons studied, reflecting a lecture type style. The sermon has a Biblical reference as the others but relies little on Biblical justification to support major premises as did the other sermons. It addresses a universal love but does so from a totally different perspective. The preacher proclaims that African-Americans should love white Americans because there are just as many skeletons in their closets as in the closets of white people. He says: "Their fathers sowed the wind; the children are now reaping the whirlwind." The preacher cites examples of African-American enslavers and African-American hatred toward whites. He claims that
although the Civil Rights Movement is good, African-Americans should not jump on every bandwagon that claims to be about good because many are not.

Sermon 8 focuses on this love principle through a commitment to nonviolence. Nonviolence involved the willingness of individuals to love others, to attack forces of evil rather than individuals, and to forgive—merging Christianity with Gandhi's principles of passive resistance. According to the Gandhian method, suffering was to be accepted without retaliation and maintained in the face of insults, beatings, and jailings. Nonviolence was linked with direct, sometimes provocative action such as sit-ins and marches, boycotts, and rallies. Most importantly, it was mixed with Biblical instructions about how to live and how to treat other people. "No ultimate victories can be gained by violence," the preacher warned. "Nonviolence is the only course for the Christian to take." The preacher adds that if there were no difficulties, there would be no successes.

The concept of violence is difficult to deal with in that it confronts us with a paradox. While it is not generally advocated, it is a long ways from being eradicated. It stains both the past and present pilgrimage of mankind. Notwithstanding, violence in this message is taken to mean as expressed by the Eisenhower Crime Commission: "behavior, designed to inflict physical injury to people. . . in violation of general moral belief or civil law." Nonviolence, in the light of this definition, is the only course for the Christian to take. No ultimate victories can be gained by violence.
Nonviolent protest was a method that took a nation by storm and surprise. African-American Protestant preachers argued that protest was necessary but that it should be guided by Christian love which was universal (colorless) in its implications if a national social change was to take place in America.

This is further illustrated in Sermon 5.

Thus we say to the god of Segregation: "It may be that our God whom we serve will deliver us; but if not, we will not bow, nor serve any longer. Let us go on knowing in our hearts that we hate no one nor will we harm anyone. Let us persevere through this midnight of terror and madness, so that the American children of the future will not have to undergo these ordeals; and thus will rise up and call us blessed.

Historically, African-Americans have viewed themselves as a powerless race, but with a strong capacity for expressing love and justice. However, in Washington and Lincoln's assessment of the movement, they note that it is doubtful that the people were actually motivated by love. But that they were motivated by the will to acquire dignity and justice without humiliation by a system that on the one hand, gladly accepted their revenue in exchange for products purchased or services rendered (such as the public transportation system), but on the other hand, relegated them to a second class citizenship in which they were to exist.²

King and other African-American Protestant preachers attempted to combine the love ethic with nonviolence because
they had hopes that when conducted on the level of Christian love, nonviolence would generate dignity, unity, and power. Historians of the movement (e.g. Lincoln, Williams, Lomax, Witherspoon) have noted that the belief that adversaries might be impressed and moved by the suffering and goodwill of the nonviolent protestors was sincere. Nonetheless, the African-American Protestant preachers were not naive enough to think that passive resistance would result in an overnight conversion in mainstream society's attitude toward race relations. Rather than an immediate reaction from white oppressors the African-American Protestant preachers were thinking in terms of a long-term historical process.

If you will protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, "There lived a great people--a black people--who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization." This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility.

Individual and Collective Esteem

The third theme communicated in the African-American sermons was the idea of maintaining a positive individual and collective esteem. In addition to getting people involved in the movement and to do so nonviolently, the sermons analyzed attempted to foster race pride, instilling a sense of "somebodyness" and self-worth to its members.
Throughout these sermons the African-American Protestant preachers suggested that self-respect is a fundamental factor in one's mental and physical well being. Self-respect and love is the foundation from which mutual respect with others can be established and maintained. In order for social change to occur, rejected people must change their minds about themselves and recognize that they are important. People who feel good about themselves will care about others. A sense of self-respect and self-worth coupled with an understanding of other people, is the beginning of social change in America. This is illustrated in Sermon 8.

In this sermon, the preacher paraphrases the story told in Joshua 17: 14-15. Through the story of the children of Israel, the preacher argues that the greatest weapon African-Americans have is to love and respect themselves; to develop a collective self-esteem.

They would not permit four hundred years of bondage, biological distinctives, material meagerness, educational retardation, and exaggerations by their enemies to strip them of a sense of worth and dignity. Without apology or ambiguity, they affirmed to Joshua: "We are a great people." This was another way of saying that they liked themselves. They could be themselves without being ashamed. They were not inclined to mimic, mindlessly, other people. They had a sense of being somebody. They comprehended in themselves usefulness and a capacity to meet meaningful needs. They included in their self-image the idea of equality with the rest of mankind. They were not cringing and crawling and bowing and blushing before anyone.
You see, when a people is daily confronted with dis-esteem by the dominant group, a self-esteem in which there is pride and pleasure is an achievement not an accident. It is true that the Bible teaches that no man should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, closely examined this same verse instructs that every man ought to think highly of himself—not more highly. It is also inscribed that every man if made in the image of God and that Christ died to save all. These twin facts of divine likeness and divine love expressed in Jesus Christ furnished grounds for individual and collective self-esteem regardless of a people's historical or contemporary situation.

This theme was also reflected in Sermon 9.

For generations the Negro American's aspirations could be stifled by the tactics of terror, but not any more. Today he can be brutalized, but not browbeaten. His head may be struck with truncheons, but not his heart with terror. Like a waking giant he is rising to his feet and bursting his bonds, and he is determined not to stop until he stands full erect.

And Sermon 4.

One alternative to universal annihilation is for American Negroes to speak out from the richness of their heritage more loudly this whole year (1959) than we have since the inauguration of Negro History Week. In order to make our voices heard and our spirits of love meaningful to the lasting good of mankind, there is a critical need for a complete unraveling of Negro history to put our cultural virtues to immediate productive services. Though there is enormous ill will, greed, cruelty and exploitation in this world, there is an overwhelming residue of good yet, if we but seek and acknowledge it. If the Negro forgets where he came from, if he discards the spirit that propelled him to his present position, if he loses faith (for there are those who mock and deny him), then American rot and dissolution will be under way.
Sermon 7 teaches a valuable lesson. African-americans should not dwell in self-pity but should turn problems into challenges because a handicap can be a blessing. The preacher offers illustrations of people who learned to make the best out of handicaps: a blind man who painted and repaired houses; a blind paperboy who refused to feel sorrow for himself and would not allow anyone else to feel sorrow for him. The Biblical person, Lazarus, gave God the opportunity to prove himself master over the grave, notes the preacher.

Not only was (George Washington) Carver a creative scientist but a blessed saint. I thought of his sickly body. I thought of how he was expected to die. I thought of how he was stolen and later swapped for a horse. I thought of how he made a garage laundry more popular than the college president's office. I thought of how he earned a master's degree at Iowa. I thought of Booker T. Washington bringing him to Tuskegee. I thought of the first time I met Carver. He wore greasy, ragged clothes. I thought of how he painted beautiful pictures with the ends of his fingers. I thought of how with those same fingers he played a piano. I thought of how he surmounted every obstacle in his path, climbing higher and higher until his recognition reached international proportions. I said to myself as I left that cemetery, "A handicap can be a blessing."

The sermons centering around maintaining a positive individual and collective esteem communicated the belief that before one can genuinely love others, one must first learn to love oneself. It is important to note that the sermons did not suggest acquiring a sense of arrogance toward other people, nor should they be satisfied with the
status quo. The sermons merely suggested that loving yourself for the person that you are is important and that African-Americans have the right to do so. It is difficult to love other people, if you don't love yourself, as reflected in Sermon 2.

"It is not a question he (Baldwin) said, of whether the white man can love me, it is a question of whether he can love himself." The same may be said of the black man as he faces the white man. I can accept other people only as I have accepted myself. I must first identify myself before I can tell who you are. I must first identify self-loathing before I can regard you with reverence and respect. I must first have my own center of loyalty established before I am eligible to offer loyalty to you.

This theme is also reflected in Sermon 11.

The quest of human dignity, identity, liberation, and power has stirred the hearts and minds of black Americans. Many who have made the quest have sought to understand themselves and their position in the world in terms of economics, government, history, science, philosophy, sociology, music, and literature. These are legitimate avenues through which the pursuit for dignity and liberation may be sought.

Sermon 1.

Let America boast of her great scientists and her many miraculous achievements in the field of science and this boast will have to include the names of Benjamin Banneker, George Washington Carver, Percy Julian, and many others. Of thousands of farms, in the building trades, in the classrooms, and in industry the vitality of American life has been greatly enhanced by the dedicated services of the American Negro.

As noted earlier, historically, African-Americans have viewed themselves as a powerless race overcome by society's
segregation laws of society that successfully worked against them. To view oneself as powerless is considered self-destructive because it contributes to the formation of a disposition of inferiority or low self-esteem, both individually and collectively. According to these orators, the African-American experience during the fifties and sixties was just as much a call for self-love as it was for social protest.

According to the preacher in Sermon 14:

When we come to that point in life where we think we've had enough, we need to reflect on the lives of those who refused to be defeated by discouragement. Bring a positive attitude into this situation. Don't give way to self-pity. This ultimately leads to failure and defeat. We must not become bitter or resentful for the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Refuse to accept the situation as final, and turn your disadvantages into advantages. In other words, make the most of your situation.

This analysis of sermons revealed that through verbal persuasion African-American Protestant preachers attempted to arouse in their audiences a sense of involvement and participation. They also sought to create within the audience a feeling of unity and sense of self-worth. Included in these themes was the use of Biblical heroes and secular illustrations from the African-American experience.

Biblical and African-American Heroes

As noted earlier in this study, African-Americans have had an intimate relationship to Old Testament heroes such as
References to Old Testament heroes and scriptures were found in eleven of the sermons. Only two references to heroes in the New Testament were cited, although ten scriptural references from the New Testament were cited. References to Biblical heroes is commonplace among sermons by preachers of all Christian faiths. It shows their knowledge of the Bible and the audience is able to apply the experiences to their own predicaments. However, the use of heroes and anecdotes from the African-American experience tended to dominate the sermons which made them unique from sermons of the dominant culture. Nine of the fifteen sermons cited specific examples from the African-American experience in order to motivate and/or inspire their audiences. The names of fifty-three African-Americans who suffered and contributed to the struggle for human rights comprise much of the content of these African-American sermons. Their heroism is celebrated, as evident in this excerpt from Sermon 8.

Without a Thurgood Marshall, before becoming a Supreme Court Justice, courageously crying against the doctrine of "separate but equal schools" in the judicial hall of the United States Supreme Court, racial segregation in education might still be constitutional law. Without the national Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its leaders like Walter White and Roy Wilkins registering with relentless procedure a deep discontent, the Negro's fight for a first-class citizenship would have been woefully weak.
In his critical analysis of African-American preaching, the Reverend Henry Mitchell concluded that illustrations from the African-American experience are effective in African-American sermons because they tend to stick very close to the gut-level issues that intimately affect black lives. And in the process of making a point clear, the African-American experience is lifted up and celebrated, and identity is enhanced.

Heroes are considered identifying factors for cultural groups because they represent the ideal state for the group, and are symbolic of everything the group values. These heroes and heroines were used because their life stories exemplify unique men and women who fought their way to eminence in their chosen careers despite serious obstacles. These obstacles consisted of feelings of alienation and acts of discrimination due to the color of their skin. They were common, unhealthy people, yet they survived and achieved simply because of the will to do so. Reflecting on the lives of these African-American heroes tells much about African-American culture. Their use in sermons contributed to African-American preachers shaping the culture by directing African-American audiences to what is or should be important in their lives. The sermons in this study revealed this type of intimacy in attempting to respond, in sermon, to what was happening in the audience's lives during that time. The use of illustrations from the African-
American experience also served to motivate African-Americans to look within its own race for wisdom and strength, role models and heroes needed to insure survival, growth and to make social changes. African-American preachers' use of anecdotes out of the African-American experience helped the audience to better identify with the message being communicated. They also served as a strategy, in some respects, to shame people who were not involved in the movement or had negative self-esteem. For example, if someone as poor as George Washington Carver or as small and fragile as Harriet Tubman could fight for human rights with courage and dignity in their day, why can't African-Americans do the same today? This sentiment is expressed in Sermon 14.

Joe Louis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Elijah, and even Jesus Christ—all faced discouragement, but each felt his work was so important that he refused to be defeated. With the faith and knowledge that God the Father would see them through, they accomplished what they had to do. With this same faith, we can do it too.

The Black Frame of Mine Component in the Sermons

The three themes identified in the sermons are in sync with the African world view which believes that maintaining an identity as a group of people is highly important for the survival of the group. In this world view, the notion that if one member of the tribe (or race) is oppressed, the tribe
(or race) as a whole suffers. If one member of the tribe (or race) achieves it is a victory for the entire tribe (or race). Thus, the notion "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am" underlies the African world view.

Asante contends that the full level of Afrocentricity is achieved when the person internalizes the African world view and values. However, components within the black frame of mind component of his Afrocentric metatheory may be viewed as modifications of African philosophy and values.

As noted in Chapter III, frame of mind refers to the way certain social, creative and psychological factors contribute to the total view of language. It determines the strategies and narratives used in maintaining the speaker's relationship with the audience. Included in this black frame of mind are black referents which this study argues that African-American Protestant preachers took into consideration when crafting these sermons, prompting them to preach sermons based on the three themes that have been discussed.

A referent is considered a mental backdrop composed of numerous values, attitudes and expectations that form a network derived from a community of common experiences. The elements included in the black referent consists of the values of oppression/paranoia, communalism, humanism, empathetic understanding, rhythm, and limited reward.
The first referent, oppression/paranoia, refers to a high degree of sensitivity by African-Americans for situations perceived as being dangerous. Foster notes that many whites cannot or do not understand the cautious attitude of most African-Americans. Therefore, they speak of widespread paranoia existing in African-American communities. What whites perceive as paranoia is viewed as a strategy of survival by African-Americans. An unfortunate consequence of paranoia, however, is that oppression, incorrectly perceived, can lead to resignation and paralysis and may eventually become self-destructive. For example, "...if eight out of ten times black people have witnessed an unjust and cruel response to their efforts, then it is not surprising for them to conclude that the response will be the same in all future attempts." Linda James Myers adds in her work on Afrocentricity that African-Americans as a people have experienced the psychology of oppression. African-Americans have been led to believe that their very physical survival was in the hands of other people; they have been denied access to the truth about their cultural heritage and history; their cultural heritage and history have been negated. However, Myers argues that if the victim has no role to play in his or her oppression, he/she can have no role to play in his or her liberation. African-Americans do have a role, however, in allowing or disallowing their minds to be controlled and their reality
defined. The charge, then, is to learn more about their choices through increased awareness of the nature of that which is within them.\textsuperscript{18}

Some people have a tendency to believe that the richer or more famous an African-American is the less oppressed or discriminated against he or she is. However, many famous personalities (e.g. Sammy Davis Jr., Lena Horne, Bill Cosby) have expressed sentiments concerning their bouts with racism which contradict this thinking. Fame and wealth do not erase the color of one's skin nor the prejudices that have been associated with race and skin color. African-American novelist James Baldwin argues in his collection of essays on race relations in the sixties that the biggest problem in America is the race problem;\textsuperscript{19} while White American anthropologist Ruth Benedict wrote that race prejudice and oppression does exist in America and little would be benefited from trying to pretend that it does not.\textsuperscript{20}

This notion of oppression/paranoia served as a mental backdrop for the creation of the sermons centering around an involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. It was oppression, evident in segregation laws and other acts of discrimination, that created the urgency of a social gospel. However, in view of the many deaths, police brutality and arrests experienced by civil rights participants, a certain amount of paranoia existed concerning the importance of participation in the struggle. This was an obstacle
African-American Protestant preachers needed to address and did so by persuading people that it was their Christian duty to get involved in the movement.

Communalism, in the black frame of mind, refers to the relationship of the individual to the group in a larger quest for survival and the ultimate goal of the just social order. This referent stresses the individual's awareness of the relationship and consequences of his or her actions to the group. Communalism coincides with the African notion of identity and the survival of one's people, thus, exemplifying the belief, "we are I am, I am we are." In African-American culture this component is exemplified in the belief that African-Americans who are aware of their self-definition as a race of people, realize that if one African-American suffers or is oppressed, the race as a whole suffers.

Communalism also implies that a cooperative effort needs to be maintained if any successes are to be made. The quest for survival and the goal of living in a just society demand a willingness of the individual to see his or her fulfillment in communal terms. With this referent in mind, African-American Protestant preachers' rhetorical language reflected an awareness of a cooperative effort needed to protest for the welfare of African-American communities. Through this referent, these African-American preachers attempted to convince their audiences that they as a group
of people held the burden of responsibility for whatever happened (or didn't happen) in their struggles. Whatever successes or failures of the movement were the successes and failures of the race and not of individuals. Communalism also involved the notion of maintaining a positive and healthy collective esteem concerning being a member of the African-American race. Without a high level of esteem, African-Americans could not commit themselves to the struggle. Thus, this referent also served as a mental backdrop behind the theme encouraging involvement in the movement.

The concern for human life in relationships between the self and others is the basis for the Humanism referent. This referent implies that a creative force lies within each individual and provides purpose and fulfillment in life. Unless the individual is allowed to grow and to give of him or herself to another, the creative force may die. Necessity rather than philanthropy motivates one to serve others. At the same time, one recognizes that human differences must be encouraged and understood rather than denied and feared.\(^2\) In the African-American experience, African-American Protestant preachers attempted to convince their audiences of the necessity of maintaining a positive self esteem because it was needed not only for participation in civil rights activities but it was also essential for their own personal growth and happiness as a member of the
human race. The individual and collective esteem theme developed from this referent.

The knowledge of social beings can only be acquired when dispassionate objective analysis is supplemented with Empathic Understanding, another referent within the black frame of mind. Foster contends that epistemological systems of knowledge that propose "I think, therefore I am" are inadequate for people of non-Western heritage. The knowledge of the non Western heritage of African-Americans proposes that "I feel therefore I think, therefore I am." Empathetic understanding is reminiscent of the African notion of the union of opposites as in the mind and the body and the acknowledgment that both rational processes and feelings are equal aspects of the human condition. The notion of empathetic understanding was also implemented by African-American Protestant preachers as they reinforced to their audiences the idea that it is possible to hate the sin (racism) without hating the sinner (racists). Empathetic understanding was also the basis for African-American Protestant preachers who reminded their audience that they (the preachers) were one of them. The African-American Protestant preachers shared their fears as well as their pains.

As noted in Charles Hamilton's historical account of African-American preachers, one of their charismatic appeals in the African-American community was the fact that African-
Americans knew that the preachers were one of them. African-American preachers knew firsthand about the experiences and fears that accompany being born black in America; and they could speak more intimately about these experiences than anyone else. All three themes were developed with this referent in mind.

Rhythm is concerned with the way things, ideas or human beings fit together and form a whole. The force of the rhythm component is upon the movement, flow and unity of life rather than upon the precise interrelationship of the parts. The rhythm component of the black referent reflects this belief. In the black referent rhythm reflects the notion that life has a continuity and rhythm that should be replicated with interpersonal and intrapersonal relations. Rhythm may be viewed as modifications of the African notion of achieving a oneness with nature or the natural rhythm of nature. It is also a modification of the Christian principle, "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord" (Romans 8:28).

In the sermons, African-American male Protestant preachers encouraged people to become involved in the movement. This could only take place if the people were willing to make the sacrifice to join forces as a cooperative effort. In order to make this sacrifice the people had to have a healthy self-esteem which would lead to a healthy collective esteem as a race. Because the movement
was promoted as a Christian movement, African-Americans needed to protest with Christian love (nonviolently). All of these factors were necessary in order to make the protest work.

The last referent, limited reward, is the belief that no matter how great the effort the expectation of return will be lower for African-Americans than for other groups. The fact that African-Americans accepted that they would receive less than whites for an equal effort was manifested in income and education statistics as well as their overall quality of life. This component does not exist for the majority of white people and many of them perceive that African-Americans receive less because they put forth less effort.25

Limited reward, a reality of oppression, could be seen in the African-American's experience, ranging from loss of life (lynchings) to codes of behavior, to employment discrimination made legitimate through the legal process in "keeping black people in their places." The notion of African-Americans receiving a limited reward regardless of their efforts had been firmly planted in the black psyche. Understanding these feelings of limited reward motivated African-American preachers to craft sermons that would convince African-American audiences that they could have some degree of control over their destiny by getting involved in the movement.
Whether African-American male Protestant preachers were cognizant or not of the notion of Afrocentricity, these sermons reveal that their cultural background contributed a dominant portion of the religious content they communicated to their audiences. The same can be said of white Eurocentric preachers. Recall in Chapter I that the noticeable differences between sermons offered by White American and African-American preachers in a collection called The Pulpit Speaks on Race created the thesis of this study.

On the basis of Asante's scope of context and frame of mind component, this study contends that the elements included in the black referent and the Afrocentric philosophy were used consciously or unconsciously by African-American male Protestant preachers during the period of study. The sermons reflected components of Afrocentricity in that they (1) were committed to the laws and moral demands of a universal order; (2) exhibited concern with the notions of unity and survival of a group of people, sharing collective responsibility and cooperation; (3) rejected materialism for spiritualism and communalism as it was channeled into a social gospel; (4) attempted to make African-Americans more aware of their cultural heritage and history through nommo as the African griots had done; (5) perceived their goals as blending harmoniously into the order of the universe thereby accepting the unity of life;
(6) accepted the dual nature of man with the notion that the mind and body unite to make a unified man; (7) accepted the belief that cathartic experiences are necessary for personal growth and enrichment.

In utilizing components of Afrocentricity, these male African-American Protestant preachers contributed to shaping African-American culture. Through messages that exhibited their Afrocentricity, these preachers transmitted mutually understood cultural values, such as dignity, courage, a sense of community and personhood, which also aided in establishing a positive rapport with their audiences.

**African-American Male Preachers' Contribution To African-American Culture**

Chapter IV showed how African-American culture influenced male African-American Protestant preachers. This chapter has illustrated how male African-American Protestant preachers reflected and shaped African-American culture. The Civil Rights Movement had a significant impact on American society and male African-American Protestant preachers played an integral role in making this impact. They did so by actively participating in the movement and by refocusing the cultural content of their sermons. As revealed earlier, many of the early male African-American preachers were involved in civil and human rights activities during the week. But on Sunday, they abandoned their
current reality for visions about another reality where troubles and misery are unheard of. These were sermons that soothed, comforted, and allowed people to escape the harsh realities of their weekdays. It was a religion of containment that diverted their attention away from their current miseries.

An analysis of the African-American sermons preached during the Civil Rights Movement revealed that one of the important contributions African-American preachers made to African-American culture was the change they introduced into Christian practice.

In so doing, African-American Protestant preachers during the Civil Rights Movement shaped African-American culture by redirecting African-Americans' attention to what they felt was important—a social gospel that involved the saving of humankind. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference represented the evolution of a national organized force dedicated to refocusing the cultural content of the religion of African-American churches. Utilizing Christian principles the preachers sought to persuade their audiences that participation in social protest was their Christian duty. Accordingly, if their goals were honorable and if done in the Christian spirit, God would be with them and would bless them in their struggles.

An old uneducated African-American woman who had participated in the Montgomery bus boycott captured the
essence of this unique social gospel when she said, "my feets is tired but my soul is rested."\textsuperscript{26}

Summary

In view of the scope of the historical events which occurred during the late fifties and the sixties, African-American preachers were presented with the challenge of responding to these events in hopes of teaching their audiences how to survive, both mentally and physically, as a race of people. The result consisted of a social gospel in which sermons were focused on: (1) getting people involved in the Civil Rights Movement; (2) promoting a universal love ethic which included a commitment to passive resistance; and (3) developing a positive individual and collective esteem as members of the African-American race. This social gospel shaped African-American culture as these African-American preachers redirected the attention of African-Americans to a gospel that was not only spiritual but also practical.
NOTES--CHAPTER VI


4 Lincoln

5 Juan Williams, Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965, (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1987.)


7 William Roger Witherspoon, Martin Luther King Jr... To the Mountaintop, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985.)

8 Fairclough 16-35.

9 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., printed in Fairclough 27-28.


15 Foster

16 Foster

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20 Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture, (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934.)

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23 Foster

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25 Foster

26 Williams 283.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement of the later fifties and the sixties had a profound impact on American society. The victories and defeats have been documented in numerous historical accounts. And throughout these pages the heroism of African-American preachers is chronicled.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a summary of the research findings and a critique of the research approach in response to the study's second question: What can rhetorical theorists and critics learn from this study?

Summary of Findings

This research project centered around one dominant question: What is the interplay between the cultural context and the sermonic content of African-American preachers? The investigation into this question produced several significant findings.

First, the discovery of over one hundred printed African-American sermons revealed that the rhetoric of African-American preachers is not simply a "spur-of-the-
moment" oratory. Although it is common-place to assume that sermons lose tremendously when put into print, the discovery served to strengthen the notion that the content of a sermon is an important component of religious oratory and can stand on its own merits.

Second, based on an investigation of the roots of African-American culture, using the notion of a cultural context as a research tool, the findings revealed that black African culture provided a rich legacy to African-Americans put into practice by its African-American preachers. This legacy has included an impressive oral communication system that is rich in the use of metaphors, analogies, imagery, a mixture of sacred and secular concerns, and communicated in narrative form. African-American preachers also inherited an intimacy with biblical heroes, particularly from the Old Testament. The emotional nature of African-American preachers can also be traced to an African past along with maintaining a belief that the human spirit can triumph over adversities. Finally, from the American slavery experience, contemporary African-American preachers inherited the challenge of being responsible to the community and people they profess to have been "called" to help.

The situations which confronted African-Americans living in America during the late fifties and sixties served as a framework in which to discover how African-American preachers addressed their audiences due to the events that
were affecting them. Looking at the historical context revealed the drama of the period under investigation. This research revealed that many of the victories of the Civil Rights Movement were due to the leadership, charisma and heroism of hundreds of male African-American preachers who led boycotts and marches, and sit-ins. They also wrote pamphlets, conducted workshops, counseled, consoled, inspired, and preached a gospel of social relevance. Many of the failures of the movement can also be attributed to them because they sometimes relied on the emotional, totally ignoring the practicalities of a decision.

Although it was the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., as chief spokesman for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who made black America aware of their power to effect change, the list of African-American preachers who have led the fight for social change in America is extensive; many of them remain anonymous.

The use of Molefi Asante's scope of context component in his Afrocentric metatheory encouraged me to go beyond the historical accounts in order to grasp an understanding of the social reality of the common African-Americans who had the most to gain from the movement whose participation was essential if the movement was to be effective.

Finally, the application of Asante's frame of mind component was important in analyzing the content of fifteen African-American sermons that were randomly selected for
study. The analysis revealed that African-American preachers refocused the cultural content from those preached by their forefathers. Rather than sermons about the next life, these preachers offered a social gospel relevant to their audiences' current realities.

Three themes emerged from the sermons. The first theme focused on getting African-Americans to become involved in the movement. The second theme concentrated on helping black people to maintain a universal love for all humankind in hopes of controlling hate and bloodshed between the races and in creating an "ideal society" in which people could live together in peace. The third theme sought to promote a positive and healthy individual and collective esteem among African-Americans in being members of the black race. An analysis of the black referents included in Asante's frame of mind component helped to gain an understanding of why these themes were important.

In crafting sermons around these themes, African-American preachers tried to convince their audiences that they could affect social changes in America and their God was with them in their struggle for dignity and human rights. In doing so, these African-American preachers played a profound role in shaping African-American culture by refocusing the cultural content of African-American sermons and in instituting a social gospel on a national level.
What can rhetorical theorists and critics learn from this study?

This study serves to strengthen the arguments that a cultural link does exist between Africans and black people living in America. More importantly, this study contributes to the notion of Afrocentricity as a significant rhetorical theory, and the study of intracultural communication as a viable research area. Devoting adequate time to studying the culture of the group being studied, whether they are African-Americans, Native Americans or any other cultural group, helps the critic tremendously in understanding and evaluating their rhetoric.

Regarding Afrocentricity, it is important to note that one does not have to be black to be Afrocentric but one does have to be committed to gaining an understanding of Afrocentricity in order to do an effective study of African-Americans. This commitment involves a serious study of the culture beginning with Africa. Africa must be at the center.

This study is also epistemic in nature in that it generates more knowledge concerning the African-American preacher's rhetorical language against the backdrop of the historic Civil Rights Movement. The findings revealed that African-American churches played a principal role in the desegregation of America. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference represented the formal commitment of the churches
in the struggle to eliminate racial injustice. Historians and rhetoricians have been quick to cite the contributions of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. However, hundreds of other African-American preachers joined the marches, sit-ins and boycotts but their names never made it into the historical accounts.

Equally important, this study generates more knowledge in the area of communication and culture. Every culture attempts to create a universe of discourse for its members, a way in which people can interpret their experience and convey it to one another. This sociological context is evident by the narrative ideas that are generated as speech events in the content of African-American sermons structure where a balance exists between the secular and sacred perspectives. This study served to reveal that the cultural context is the world of experience in which people live and love, hate and believe. The sermon's lessons are drawn from the contemporary world and from a context familiar to the congregation. We tend to accept this relationship of communication and culture on the surface, therefore taking it for granted without exploring its effects within the culture and on other cultures. This study has focused on the former.
Implications for Further Research

Across the pages of history the contributions of African-American preachers to the social changes in America have virtually gone unnoticed by historians and rhetoricians. However, if adequate time and commitment were spent in research, the scholar would discover that in the persona of African-American preachers lies some of the most colorful and dynamic personalities ever to illuminate American society.

This study will serve as a springboard for future research projects in the analysis of African-American preachers and their sermons.

As discussed in Chapter I, African-Americans were provided with two choices in how to deal with racism in America. Some chose the Christian nonviolent approach, the focus of this study. But many others chose self-defense "by any means necessary" as a means to combat racism. An analysis of sermons with advocated this approach would make for an equally valuable study.

Second, there have been numerous critiques of the Reverend Jesse Jackson's presidential endeavors and keynote addresses at both the 1984 and 1987 Democratic national conventions. I would be interested in studying the Afrocentricity of Jackson. Particularly his sermons, some of which he has included in his work, Straight From the Heart. Jackson typifies a strong commitment to Afrocentric
ideals which is why critics from outside of the culture have difficulty understanding his rhetorical style.

Also, in collecting sermons for analysis I discovered a collection of sermons offered by African-American female preachers which were published in the early 1980s. Even though I was not interested in studying the rhetoric of African-American female preachers in this study, after reading Linda James Myers' work on Afrocentricity, one that is based on feminine principles, an analysis of these sermons based on her work would make for an interesting and highly significant contribution to our knowledge of African-American female preachers.

Finally, as noted in Chapter III, I am not convinced that the alleged sexism regarding female pastors/preachers is a valid argument unless we take into consideration that sexism can exist among one's sex. I would be very interested in conducting a survey study among African-American women concerning their preference of having a male or female pastor and uncovering the reasons for their preference.

These research ventures will hopefully serve to strengthen the noticeable shortage in the literature focusing on the rhetoric of African-American preachers.
Summary

This chapter has highlighted the findings of the study and offered some suggestions for further research projects which continue to focus on the rhetoric of African-American preachers. This study and further studies will serve to strengthen the limited amount of research done on this unique group of orators.


APPENDIX A

SERMON TITLES AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Sermon Title: "Segregation, Discrimination and the Christian Church."
   Delivery Date: Between 1955 and 1965.
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: The Pulpit Speaks on Race

2. Sermon Title: "Some Comments on Race Hate."
   Delivery Date: Between 1960-1969.
   Preacher: The Rev. Gardner Taylor
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: Best Black Sermons

3. Sermon Title: "Concerning Enemies."
   Delivery Date: Between 1955-56.
   Preacher: The Rev. Howard Thurman
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: The Growing Edge

4. Sermon Title: "Brotherhood and Freedom."
   Delivery Date: 1959.
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: Keep the Faith, Baby!

5. Sermon Title: "A Faith for Difficult and Critical Times."
   Delivery Date: 1957.
   Preacher: The Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: Manuscript given to author

6. Sermon Title: "Loving Your Enemies."
   Delivery Date: 1963.
   Preacher: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: Strength to Love

7. Sermon Title: "Handicapped Lives."
   Delivery Date: late sixties.
   Preacher: The Rev. William Holmes Borders
Religious Affiliation: Baptist
Publication: Best Black Sermons

8. Sermon Title: "Recipe for Racial Greatness."
   Delivery Date: late sixties.
   Religious Affiliation: Baptist
   Publication: The Gospel for the Ghetto

   Delivery Date: between 1955-56.
   Religious Affiliation: Methodist
   Publication: The Pulpit Speaks on Race

10. Sermon Title: "Conflict, Challenge, Defeat, Victory."
    Delivery Date: 1968.
    Religious Affiliation: Methodist
    Publication: The Soul of the Black Preacher

11. Sermon Title: "Jesus, the Word of Life."
    Delivery Date: 1967.
    Religious Affiliation: Methodist
    Publication: The Soul of the Black Preacher

12. Sermon Title: "Segregation and the Ten Commandments."
    Delivery Date: between 1955-56.
    Preacher: The Rev. Everett Tilson
    Religious Affiliation: Methodist
    Publication: The Pulpit Speaks on Race

13. Sermon Title: "Golgotha 1964."
    Delivery Date: 1963.
    Preacher: The Rev. Frank T. Wilson
    Religious Affiliation: Presbyterian
    Publication: Black Preaching in the Presbyterian Tradition

14. Sermon Title: "When You Think You Have Had Enough."
    Delivery Date: late sixties.
    Preacher: The Rev. William G. Gillespie
    Religious Affiliation: Presbyterian
    Publication: Black Preaching in the Presbyterian Tradition

15. Sermon Title: "Sins of the Fathers."
    Delivery Date: late sixties.
    Preacher: The Rev. Shelby Rooks
    Religious Affiliation: Presbyterian
Publication: Black Preaching in the Presbyterian Tradition
APPENDIX B
SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

Sermon #1 - "Segregation, Discrimination, and the Christian Church"
John 9:4
We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work.

Sermon #2 - "Some Comments on Race Hate"
John 4:9
Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealing with the Samaritans.

Sermon #3 - "Concerning Enemies"
Psalm 139:21-22
Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred.

Sermon #4 - "Brotherhood and Freedom"
I John 2:9-11
He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Sermon #5 - "A Faith for Difficult and Critical Times"
Acts 27:25
"Wherefore, sirs be of good cheer: For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Sermon #6 - "Loving Your Enemies"
Matthew 5:43-45
Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be children of your father which is in heaven.

Sermon #7 - "Handicapped Lives"

Psalm 137
"By the rivers of Babylon we sat down. Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion."

We yearned for home. We wanted fellowship and union with our sisters and brothers. The empty loneliness of Babylon brought sorrow to our hearts and tears to our eyes. "There they that carried us away captive required of us song. And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'"

Hebrews 11:25
Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Job 23:10
"...but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Revelation 1:10
I was the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

Psalm 23:4-5
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; they rod and they staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.

Psalm 137:5-6
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

2 Corinthians 12:9
And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most
gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Sermon #8 - "Recipe for Racial Greatness"
Joshua 17:14-15
And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.

Sermon #9 - "A New Resource"
Genesis 43:3
You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.

Sermon #10 - "Conflict, Challenge, Defeat, Victory"
Matthew 14:24-31
For the wind was against them. . .But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying,"It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. . ."Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus, but when he saw the Lord he said, "Save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "0 man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Sermon #11 - "Jesus, the Word of Life"
John 6:67-69
Jesus said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.

Sermon #12 - "Segregation and the Ten Commandments"
Exodus 20:1-17
And God spake all these words saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, but of the house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any things that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord they God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shown mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord they God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him quietless that taken his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all they work! but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work thou, nor they son, not they daughter, thy cattles, not thy stranger that is within they gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honor thy father and they mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord they God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery
Thou shalt not steal
Thou shalt not bear false witness against they neighbor
Thou shalt not covet they neighbor's house,
Thou shalt not covet they neighbor's wife, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is they neighbor's

Sermon #13 - "Golgotha 1964"
Luke 23:33
And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Sermon #14 - "When You Think You Have Had Enough"
I King 19:4
It is enough.

Sermon #15 - "Sins of the Fathers"
Ezekiel 18:1-3
The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land
of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion anymore to use this proverb in Israel.