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Crossover for Christ: Contemporary Gospel since the 1990s

A dissertation presented

by

Charrise Monet Barron

To

The Department of African and African American Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the subject of

African and African American Studies

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

May 2017

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Dissertation Advisor: Professor Marla Frederick Charrise Monet Barron

Crossover for Christ:
Contemporary Gospel since the 1990s

Abstract

Black gospel music recently (1993) entered a new phase that I have named the "platinum age." This period was marked especially by both the quantity of sales of gospel music (platinum-selling albums) and by a shift away from discourses rooted in the lived experience of race-based suffering. Instead, gospel artists assumed a post-racial orientation that catered to mainstream audiences whose values and tastes did not always match those of traditional black churchgoers. My dissertation shows that these dramatic shifts are tied to revised theologies of salvation and sanctification that have swept black megachurches (churches with at least two thousand attendees each week). Specifically, Pentecostals' recalibration of piety has allowed gospel artists to market themselves in ways that appeal to mainstream audiences, while maintaining access to prominent churches whose leaders are no longer prone to condemn the artists' work as unholy or too "worldy." My dissertation relies upon historical and ethnographic research methodologies, and makes interventions in the study of African American Pentecostalism as well as the ethnomusicological study of gospel music.

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures v
Acknowledgments vi
Dedication x
Acronym Key xi
Glossary of Terms xii
Introduction 1

PART I: INDUSTRY AND ECCLESIAL FORCES

Chapter 1
The Rise of the Platinum Age 17
Chapter 2
"You Sound Nice Baby, But Where Is the Oil?": Revised Pentecostal Theologies in the Platinum Age of Gospel 57

PART II: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLATINUM AGE OF GOSPEL

Chapter 3
Sexy for Jesus: Accessible Performance of Gospel Music 111
Chapter 4
"He Sure Does Move His Hips A Lot:" Kirk Franklin's Performance of Accessibility 149
Chapter 5
Great God, God's Friends, and the Global Idiom of Crossover Praise and Worship Music 185
Conclusion 233
Appendices 235
Appendix A: Gospel Music History 236
Bibliography 239

Tables and Figures

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 African American Sacred Music Over Time 22
Figure 2.1 Meme posted on Facebook by Tasha Chrichlow. Accessed September 29, 2015. 98
Figure 2.2 “Hotline Bling” Praise and Worship Remix. Worship Service Excerpt Posted on Facebook by Gospel Group 21:03 104
Figure 3.1 Promotional Material for Erica Campbell’s song “Help” (2014) 135
Figure 4.1 Pop-Gospel Advertisement. Billboard, June 1, 1963 164

List of Tables

Table 1.1 RIAA-Certified Platinum Gospel Recordings, Sorted by Certification Date 26
Table 2.1 Prominent Black Megachurches Frequented by National Gospel Artists in the Platinum Age 67
Table 2.2 Prominent Platforms for Black Gospel Artists during Platinum Age 69
Table 2.3 Platinum-Certified Gospel Artists and Their Respective Childhood or Claimed Denominational Affiliations 79
Table 2.4 Other Major National Gospel Artists and Their Respective Childhood or Claimed Denominational Affiliations 79
Table 4.1 Major Gospel Labels and Prominent Artists--1991 154
Table 5.1 Devotional and Praise and Worship Comparison 199
Table 5.2 Selected Israel Houghton Discography 206
Table 5.3 Post-Racialism and Friendship with God in Houghton's *Live From Another Level* album 211
Table 0.1 Gospel Music Milestones 236

Acknowledgments

I give thanks and praise to Jesus Christ for the grace to complete this course of study.

I thank my primary dissertation advisor Marla Frederick, and my dissertation committee members Robin Bernstein, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Ingrid Monson, and Kay Kaufman Shelemay. I have reveled in the knowledge that my dissertation committee is comprised of a magnificent team of scholars—who are all women. Your sustained encouragement and enthusiasm for my project has buoyed me throughout my research and writing.

I am also grateful for the many scholars who advised and encouraged me along the way, including James Abbington, Lawrence Bobo, Catherine Brekus, Bob Darden, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., David Hempton, Kellie Carter Jackson, Emmett G. Price III, Melanye Price, Albert Raboteau, and Jonathan Walton.

I greatly appreciate the support I have received across Harvard including: The African and African American Studies (AAAS) Department; the Music Department; Judy and Sean Palfrey, Jorge Teixeira, Marcy Holabaugh, and all my family at Adams House; Homi Bhaba, Mary Halpenny-Killip, Sarah Razor, and the entire Mahindra Humanities Center; GSAS Dean Xiao-Li Meng, Sheila Thomas, Shigehisa Kuriyama, and the Society of Horizons Scholars (Harvard Horizons); and the members of the North American Religions Colloquium (NARC).

To the administrators in the AAAS and Music Departments, especially Kathleen Cloutier, Leanne Chaves, Isatta Coomber, Nancy Shafman, Eva Kim, Kaye Denny, and Charles Stillman: thank you for all you do to make life easier for everyone else.

Thank you to all of the faculty, staff, and students in the Colorado College (CC) Music Department where I have completed my dissertation. I am grateful to CC and the Consortium for Faculty Diversity (CFD) for this Pre-Doctoral Riley Scholar-In-Residence and Visiting Instructor appointment. To all of my new friends and colleagues across the Colorado College campus, especially Ryan Bañagale, Emily Chan, Stormy Burns, Victoria Levine, Heidi Lewis, Yetunde Olaiya, and my entire 8th-block gospel music class: thank you for being so supportive.

My efforts were significantly aided by the following fellowships and grants: Mahindra Humanities Center Interdisciplinary Dissertation Completion Fellowship; John Knowles Paine Traveling Fellowship; Philippe Wamba Summer Research Travel Grant; Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Merit/Graduate Society Term-Time Research Fellowship; Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) Doctoral Fellowship; Charles Warren Center Summer Travel Grant; Richard F. French Fellowship; Wesley Weyman Grant; GSAS Pre-dissertation Summer Fellowship; and Harvard University Graduate Prize Fellowship;.

My sincere thanks go to all of the artists on this continent and abroad whose insights fueled this project. While time does not permit me to list everyone here, I want to give a special thanks to Crystal Aikin, Pastor Kim Burrell, Fred Hammond, Nadine Lee, Robert "Sput" Searight, Thaddeus Tribbett, Asaph Ward, and Bishop Marvin Winans. I am grateful for all who made the Potter's House feel more like a home. Min. Oscar Williams, thank you for all of your help. Jamar Jones, the Potter's House Band, the Chorale, Cherrie Thompson Scott, the Green Family, the Cox Family, Min. Tracy Pollard, Rhonda Jones, Tommye Young-West, and Rev. Cynthia James: thank you.

I am thankful for all who helped my research in Ghana, especially Emmanuel Akyeampong and the International Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Ghana; the entire International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) Zamar Band, including Fred Attah, Samuel Aziati, Jesse Hagan, and Kenneth Woanyah; Paul Ancy; Emmanuel Arthur; Esther Acolatse; Vera Akoto; David Amponsah; Pastor Samuel Brew; Sangu Delle; Pastor Edwin Dadson; Pastor Ifueko Igiehon; Mark Opoku; Pastor Nana Kwaku Poku; the Woanyah Family; and all the musicians and worship leaders who shared so generously of your time and talents with me.

I want to thank all of the wonderful people who supported my work while I made Southern Methodist University a home away from home. I offer a myriad of thanks to Herbert Coleman, as well as to Tonya Burton, C. Michael Hawn, Evelyn Parker, and Theodore Walker Jr.

Thank you to all my pastors who have supported my scholarship and ministry through the years: Gregory Ballard Sr., Jaron and Concetta Green, Oliver Scott, and Michael P. Williams. Pastor Delbert Mack Sr., First Lady A. Denise Mack, Delbert Mack Jr., Pastor Freddie and Alyncia Nelson, Mayme Gardner, and the entire Mack Family: I thank God for you all. Thank you, Pastors Dwight and Donna Strode, as well as Pastors Floyd and Tomika Preston, for welcoming me in Colorado Springs.

Rev. Cynthia Franklin, thank you for always being just a phone call away. Charlotte Jones, it is time to celebrate again! Pamela Williams, I am so glad God put me on your heart. Pastor Yvonne Philpot, thank you for all of your prayer and care. Mrs. Beatrice Mayes, thank you for mentoring me since I was a National Youth Achiever.

I am so very grateful for the community of friends and colleagues at Harvard who made me smile, write better, or both. Special thanks go to Scott Poulson-Bryant, Dale Gadsden, Anthony “Tony” Jack, Helen Jin Kim, Cori Tucker Price, Kera Street, Micah Wittmer, all my tutor fam in Adams and other Houses, and Sheldon Reid.

To my uncle James Harden Jr., aunt Nita Harden, and grandmother Mary Harden, thank you all for believing in me.

To my father, Barry Barron Sr., and “the siblings,” Tasha Barron, Barry and Julie Barron Jr., and Shavon and Percy Wyatt Jr.: I love you and thank you for all of your support over this decade that I have been back in school (since Yale). An extra note of thanks goes to Shavon for proofreading, transcribing, and hopping on planes to come see about me.

Finally, I dedicate this work to God, and to Cynthia Barron—my mother and all-around extraordinary woman whose love I still feel and voice I still miss.

Dedication

For God and Cynthia Barron

Acronym Key

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
A.O.H.	Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God
BET	Black Entertainment Network
CCM	Contemporary Christian Music
COGIC	Church of God In Christ or Churches of God In Christ
COOLJC	Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith
CWM	Contemporary Worship Music
GMA	Gospel Music Association
GMWA	Gospel Music Workshop of America
GP	Gospel group God's Property
NCGCC	(or NCGCC Inc.) National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses Inc.
P&W	Praise and Worship
P.A.W.	Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
PTL	*Praise the Lord* (Christian television broadcast)
RIAA	Recording Industry Association of America
RFC	Gospel group Radical for Christ
TBN	Trinity Broadcasting Network
UPC	United Pentecostal Church

Glossary of Terms

Secular: nonecclesiastical, or not overtly deriving from or pointing to Christian spirituality. The opposite of *sacred*.

Worldly: ordinary, opposed to that which is conspicuously spiritual.

Introduction

Perhaps the first time I realized the power and impact of gospel music, I was no more than six years old. I woke up in the middle of the night for some reason. All was dark and quiet except for the music coming from the clock radio that my mother kept on the kitchen counter. When I was little, the carpet covering the threshold of my bedroom door used to scare me so badly, that I would not want to leave my room at night. (When the bedroom was dark and the hallway's light hit the threshold, the otherwise beige carpet would look like a dark and stormy sea of Texas-sized cockroaches to my young eyes.) But, that night, it was too dark for me to see imagined cockroaches, and the music was too beautiful. That night, I left my bedroom and walked down the hallway until I was inches from the radio. As the perennial 12:00 midnight flashed red (because the time on the clock needed to be set), Andraé Crouch and his singing compatriots belted:

> We need to hear from you
> We need a word from you
> If we don't hear from you
> What will we do?
> Wanting you more each day
> Show us your perfect way
> There is no other way
> That we can live[1]

[1] "We Need to Hear from You," Andrae Crouch, *Finally*, CD (Intersound, 1982).

And, in that cozy two-bedroom apartment on the southwest side of Houston, TX, while my parents and siblings slept, I stood captivated as the gospel sounds washed over me. I was already used to hearing great gospel music in church every Sunday, and music was often playing in house. But, there was something special about hearing that song on that night. I do not recall what I did after the song ended; I imagine I made my way back to bed. I just know that I did not move until the song ended. This memory of hearing that song play on the kitchen clock radio remains a poignant one for me; it marks the beginning of my enduring relationship with gospel music.

What Is Gospel Music?

In this dissertation, the term *gospel music* refers specifically to gospel music predominantly produced by black Americans, opposed to gospel music predominantly created by white Americans, which is called *Christian music* in the American music industry. *Gospel music* is a black American Christian music form that praises God, reinforces Christian texts and principles, or facilitates encounter with God. This definition adds to ethnomusicologist Mellonee Burnim's definition of gospel as "[r]eligious music of African Americans that emerged in urban centers during the early decades of the twentieth century."[2] Burnim further explains that gospel is more than just a music genre, rather it is "a music complex, which embodies ideology,

[2] Even more specifically, Burnim states, "Gospel music is the twentieth-century form of African American religious music that evolved in urban cities following the Great Migration of Blacks [*sic*] from the agrarian South in the period surrounding World Wars I and II." Mellonee V. Burnim, "Gospel," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 189.

aesthetic, and behavior."[3] Scholars do not always explicitly define gospel in their texts on gospel artists or music. As a result, Burnim's definition in *African American Music* is an important reference.

Some definitions of *gospel music*, are contested among scholars of (black and white) gospel music. The contestation is partly rooted in some scholars' desires to: decenter African American experience from the term *gospel*; and reify European lineage of gospel music. Yet, in American popular culture, *gospel music* is strongly correlated with African American Christian musical expression. To obfuscate African American Christian heritage in a redefinition of *gospel* is to depart from the term's usage in popular culture.

When some people think of gospel music, they probably think of something like a robed choir in a church, singing boisterously about Jesus Christ, as they clap their hands and sway from side to side. Since the 1990s, however, gospel music could just as easily look like gospel artist Kirk Franklin and his group sporting their urban casual wear, as they sing, rap, and execute hip hop dance moves. My research shows that the performance practices and sales successes of artists like Kirk Franklin are so different from what came before, that they represent an entirely new era in gospel music— the platinum age of gospel." In 1995, gospel music scholar Horace Boyer announced what he deemed the "golden age of gospel" music (1945 to 1965), in which gospel music was both well established as an acceptable liturgical music style across black

[3] Mellonee Burnim, "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic, and Behavior," in *More than Dancing: Essays on Afro-American Music and Musicians*, ed. Irene V. Jackson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 147.

Protestant denominations and gaining popularity in mainstream culture.[4] Gospel's golden age saw the success of gospel artists including Clara Ward, Sam Cooke, Mahalia Jackson, The Caravans, and a host of gospel quartets such as the Mighty Clouds of Joy. I have dubbed the new period (1993-2013) "the platinum age" to recognize succession from gospel's golden age and to acknowledge consumers' acceptance of a more commercialized representation of gospel.

The platinum age has two defining characteristics. The first is the extraordinary commercial success achieved by numerous gospel artists, which in turn is reflected in the voluminous number of platinum record sales of their artistry (hence the name *platinum age*). A significant number of national gospel artists aligned not only their music and lyrics with popular culture, but also their rhetoric, fashion, and even dance moves. This was to attract audiences who might not necessarily go to black churches, or to churches at all.

Second and more striking, neo-Pentecostal megachurches ushered in a new aesthetics and theology of gospel music which espoused reconciliation between piety and secularity. Beyond the increased commercialization of gospel in the platinum age, gospel artists were responding to a significant theological shift in the definition of piety that had taken place among leaders of prominent black churches.

In this dissertation, I use the term "secular" in the way that the artists and preachers that I interviewed and studied use the word. In this case, *secular* denotes "nonecclesiastical," or not overtly deriving from or pointing to Christian spirituality. In his book, *Passionately Human, No*

[4] Horace Clarence Boyer, *The Golden Age of Gospel*, Music in American Life Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 50. Boyer first published this book as Horace Clarence Boyer, *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel* (Washington, D.C.: Elliott & Clark, 1995).

Less Divine, religious historian Wallace Best states that "African American religion has historically defied" Eliade's sacred-secular polarity.[5] Best further states, "The sacredness of things (objects, relics, symbols) or moral communities (churches) is not inherent; it comes by social agreement."[6] Best is asserting that the Western sacred-secular binary is not an absolute polarity for African American Christians, nor is it absolutely binding. (One could certainly argue the same for any American Christian tradition, regardless of race.) Rather than focus on whether the sacred-secular dichotomy adequately represents African American Christians, my dissertation illumines the changing "social agreements," or ecclesiastic definitions of both holy activity and sinful behavior, that inform platinum-age gospel artists.[7] This disruption then allows artists to not only look for the sacred among innocuously profane acts, but also sacralize profane acts that would have traditionally been considered a threat to spiritual wellbeing. The *evangelizing or spiritually disciplining intention* of the person engaging in the act sacralizes the

[5] Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2. Durkheim defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices that separate sacred items over and against mundane or profane (or secular) items. There is a "radical duality" between the sacred and the secular; they are borne of two separate "genera." Furthermore, the secular cannot encounter the sacred without transformation. Durkheim thus asserts that religion is constitutive of beliefs about what is sacred, and the rites necessary to encounter the sacred. Émile Durkheim and Karen Elise Fields, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 36–41. In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade also emphasizes the ontological chasm between the sacred and the profane. He goes further to say that it is the work of the "religious man" to make his normal activities sacred. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, vol. TB81, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

[6] Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952*, 2.

[7] Talal Asad describes this type of activity as a "change in grammar of concepts." Indeed, Asad also rejects the notion that "the secular" is opposite and wholly apart from "the sacred." See Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 25.

threatening activity. I refer to these sacralizing acts as *sanctified secularity* in chapter 5. While the consensus among scholars of African American religion, is that the sacred-secular dichotomy is a false one, this dichotomous language is still in heavy use within African American churches, as evidenced in Pastor Jackie McCullough's sermon that I reference in chapter 2.

My use of the term piety encompasses a vast network of behaviors and practices that signal devotion to God. Historically, to display piety, gospel artists were expected to conspicuously adhere to various prohibitions enforced by leaders at prominent black churches where artists sang. By the platinum age, however, prominent pastors had relaxed a number of prohibitions, especially those against integration into contemporary culture. In this way, church leaders recalibrated piety and allowed gospel artists to engage in activities that would have previously been considered vulgar or sinful. Consequently, platinum-age gospel artists could enjoy access to prominent church platforms even as they collaborated with pop stars; acted in movies; recorded romantic music; and even wore trendy, body-conscious clothing.

Consumers also responded favorably. During the platinum age, no less than twenty-four different black gospel recordings achieved platinum sales, or sales of at least 1 million units. Before the platinum age, it was very rare for black gospel artists to achieve platinum sales. Only a handful had done so previously—Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson, The Hawkins brothers, Shirley Ceasar, James Cleveland, and Aretha Franklin.[8] The gospel industry accomplished a staggering feat in releasing twenty-four platinum-selling projects in a twenty-year period.

[8] See chapter 1 for more platinum-sales figures.

Theories and Methods

I come to this study of gospel as a life-long listener, composer, musician, of this sacred music, and as an ordained Christian minister and former pastor.[9] I have served in music ministry at churches across the United States, and abroad. I have witnessed firsthand the wide and vexing chasm between scholars' interpretation of the work of African American churches, and how pastors, musicians, and churchgoers actually see themselves and their work in the world. Consequently, I hope that my scholarship contributes to the study of black churches and black gospel among academicians and practitioners alike.

I have used historical and ethnographic methodologies to critically examine contemporary black American gospel music since the 1990s. Ethnographic research for this project included a year of field work in the city of Dallas, Texas, where I observed and interviewed national gospel artists, producers, and industry executives including Asaph Ward, Oscar Williams, Thaddaeus Tribbett, and Crystal Aikin, all of whom were affiliated with the largest black megachurch in the USA, The Potter's House of Dallas, TX. Additionally, I interviewed legendary gospel artists Kirk Franklin, Robert "Sput" Searight, Fred Hammond, Pastor Kim Burrell, and Bishop Marvin Winans.[10] I conducted archival research at Baylor

[9] My siblings and I formed a gospel singing group when I was in elementary school, and I began playing piano in my local church, when I was in middle school. When I graduated from high school I was directing choirs and effectively serving as the minister of music at my local church. I began playing electric organ (Hammond) in church as a college student.

[10] Interviews included: Kirk Franklin, Interview via with Kirk Franklin, interview by Charrise Barron, Email Correspondence via Monica Coates, May 16, 2015; Asaph A. Ward, Interview with Asaph A. Ward, interview by Charrise Barron, The Potter's House Church, 6777 W Kiest Blvd, Dallas, TX 75236, June 17, 2015; Crystal Aiken, interview by Charrise Barron, June 18, 2015; Delbert Mack Jr., Interview with Delbert Mack Jr., interview by Charrise Barron, Skype, June 22, 2015; Fred Hammond, Interview with Fred Hammond, interview by Charrise Barron, Fred Hammond's Studio, May 1, 2015; Geno Young, Interview with Geno Young, interview by Charrise Barron, BuzzBrews Deep Ellum, 2801 Commerce

University, in Waco, TX, and the Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. In fact, I was the first scholar given access to the *Gospel Today*, *Gospel Industry Today*, and *Score* magazine collections donated by publisher Teresa Hairston to the Berklee College of Music's Africana Studies Center.

Without question, black American gospel music has gained audiences worldwide. My attention to black American gospel music's global reach led me to Ghana's capital city Accra, where I studied the interplay between Ghanaian and black American gospel. As a research fellow in the University of Ghana's International Institute for Advanced Studies, I engaged in participant observation at four different churches, including two of the nations most celebrated houses of worship—the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), pastored by Mensa Otabil, and Action Chapel, pastored by Nicholas Duncan-Williams. I also attended North Keneshie Assemblies of God and a local Church of Pentecost. I interviewed the worship pastors at ICGC and Action Chapel, and interviewed and/or made music with other gospel artists and musicians including in Accra and Tema. Additionally, I spent time with national gospel artists and musicians in London, England.[11]

Street, Dallas, TX 75226, July 10, 2017; Israel Houghton, Interview with Israel Houghton, Telephone, November 11, 2009; Kim Burrell, interview by Charrise Barron, Love & Liberty Fellowship Church, 16730 Hedgecroft Drive, Houston, TX 77060, June 11, 2011; Marvin Winans, Interview with Marvin Winans, interview by Charrise Barron, Conference Call, June 5, 2015; Nadine Lee, Interview with Nadine Lee, interview by Charrise Barron, Skype, April 13, 2015; Oscar Williams, Interview with Oscar Williams, interview by Charrise Barron, Dallas, Texas, June 26, 2017; Robert "Sput" Searight, Interview with Robert "Sput" Searight, Dallas, Texas, April 20, 2015; Thaddaeus Tribbett, Thaddaeus Tribbett, interview by Charrise Barron, The Potter's House Church, 6777 W Kiest Blvd, Dallas, TX 75236, June 17, 2015; Monica Coates, Informal Conversation with Monica Coates, interview by Charrise Barron, Telephone, April 23, 2015.

[11] Additionally, between July 25, 2010 and March 13, 2011, I visited the following historically black churches: St. Paul A.M.E. Church, Cambridge; Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Boston; Pentecostal

My dissertation relies most heavily on the archival research that I conducted, including mining the full 30,000+ entries of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) database, and pouring over countless hours of audio and video recordings.[12] While I engaged extensively in participant observation and have included ethnographic vignettes, this dissertation is not an ethnography of any one church, localized group of churches, or any one artist. Rather, this dissertation is a critical survey of national black gospel artists' changing relationships with the church and with the music industry over time.

Scholarly Contributions

My project is interdisciplinary, touching the study of religion, African and African studies, and ethnomusicology. My primary contributions to the study of black gospel music specifically and to the aforementioned fields more generally are threefold. First, I define and document *the platinum age of gospel*, and critically analyze the transformations of gospel performance that characterize the period. Second, I proffer two theoretical frameworks for critically analyzing and historicizing the music and theological changes among neo-Pentecostals which propelled the platinum age: 1) *the recalibration of piety*, as described above; and 2) *the performance of accessibility*, or an artist's self-representation as relatable to a target audience

Tabernacle, Cambridge; Abundant Life Church, Cambridge; Jubilee Christian Church, Boston; Kingdom Church, Boston; Bethel A.M.E. Church, Boston; Grace Church of All Nations, Boston.

[12] I manually extracted each entry from the RIAA website, and examined each entry for relevance to gospel music, as the RIAA online database does not categorize by genre, nor does the RIAA provide a fully downloadable or searchable database for researchers or consumers to access.

beyond the artist's normative fan base—in this case, beyond black American churchgoers.[13] I draw largely from the works of ethicists Chery Sanders and Jonathan Walton to scaffold my discussion of neo-Pentecostal leaders' recalibration of piety. Walton's *Watch This!* defines neo-Pentecostalism, and Cheryl Sanders's *Saints in Exile*, explicates the "exilic consciousness" that black Holiness and Pentecostal churchgoers have historically adopted.[14] Of course, ethicist R. H. Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* factors into my understanding of exilic consciousness.[15]

I focus on Holiness and Pentecostal, or Sanctified theologies, because a majority of the platinum-selling crossover gospel artists were raised in or otherwise affiliated with these Christian traditions. My work shows that prominent neo-Pentecostal pastors of churches that recorded music and/or regularly hosted national gospel artists, began to redefine the Christian's relationship with the world. Exilic consciousness now manifested as inward, spiritual, or attitudinal distinctions from contemporary culture, rather than as observable differences in one's actions, attire, or associations. To be pious no longer required distance from popular culture. Gospel artists capitalized on this new ecclesial freedom in the platinum age.

Ethnomusicologist Gesa F. Hartje rightly asserts that "as an institution of worship practice P&W [praise and worship] is unquestionably one of the defining elements of evangelical

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[13] I thank Ingrid Monson for helping me craft language which more explicitly expresses my dissertation's unique contributions to aforementioned fields of scholarship.

[14] Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This!: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity Series (NYU Press, 2009); Cheryl Jeanne Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture*, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[15] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 50th Anniversary Expanded edition (HarperOne, 2001).

culture in the United States."[16] Liturgical language scholar Gail Ramshaw classifies *evangelical* Christians as Protestants who: "emphasize a personal experience of conversion;" hold "a literalist interpretation of the Bible;" and "[commit] to a conservative lifestyle."[17] Ramshaw does not define "conservative," however. Consequently, a wide range of denominations and traditions can fit under the evangelical rubric, and the largest three traditions among African American Protestants—Baptist, Pentecostal, and Methodist—certainly classify as evangelical. In this dissertation, the term "black churches" or "African American churches" refers to evangelical churches in the United States that are predominately and historically comprised of African Americans. I use "Protestant" and "evangelical" interchangeably when describing African American churches, because evangelicals predominate among African American Protestants.[18]

Historian Evelyn Higginbotham's conception of "the politics of respectability," and religion historian Bradford Verter's development of "spiritual capital," (drawing from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's "religious capital") influence my conception of the *performance of*

[16] Gesa F. Hartje, "Keeping in Tune with the Times—Praise & Worship Music as Today's Evangelical Hymnody," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 48, no. 4 (2009): 365.

[17] Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 125.

[18] I also suspect praise and worship is not uncommon even among black Protestant churches that do not subscribe to the "evangelical" moniker.

accessibility.[19] Further, my critical analysis of crossover artists' accessible performances draws from the sociologist Erving Goffman and theater studies scholar Joseph Roach.[20]

English and Africana studies scholar Stacy Boyd's explication of "black masculine anxiety" among African American Christian men buoys my analysis of stereotype threats that male gospel artists uniquely face.[21] Likewise, Evelyn Higginbotham's examination of "vernacular discourses of religion" and education scholar Joyce King's exposition of "dysconscious racism" shape my critical engagement of crossover praise-and-worship music.[22]

Chapter Outline

This work is divided in two parts. The first, "Industry and Ecclesial Forces," explains the events inciting the platinum age of gospel. The first chapter "The Rise of the Platinum Age," defines platinum-age gospel and narrates gospel music history unto the 1990s when this new era

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[19] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 2 (June 2003): 150–74; Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 14–25.

[20] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday Anchor Original (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); Joseph R. Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

[21] Social psychologist Claude Steele explains "stereotype threat" in his book *Whistling Vivaldi*. Claude Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010); Stacy C. Boyd, *Black Men Worshipping: Intersecting Anxieties of Race, Gender, and Christian Embodiment*, Black Religion, Womanist Thought, Social Justice Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011).

[22] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture: Black Religion and Race Records in the 1920s and 1930s," in *The House That Race Built: Black Americans, U.S. Terrain*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, 1997), 157–77; Joyce E. King, "Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers," *The Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (1991): 133–46.

began. A primary focus of the gospel industry since the 1990s has been crossing over to mainstream ecclesial and popular markets. Centering on the legacy of contemporary gospel Artist Andraé Crouch, who found success in both aforementioned crossover markets, the chapter outlines gospel crossover history since gospel's golden age. The second chapter, "You Sound Nice Baby, But Where Is the Oil?": Revised Pentecostal Theologies in the Platinum Age of Gospel" explains the guiding theologies of salvation and sanctification that have historically informed African-American Pentecostal churches, and how these theologies changed just prior to gospel's platinum age. These theological revisions gave gospel artists en masse the spiritual and social latitude to take advantage of the music industry's increased investments in taking gospel music out of black churches and into mainstream marketplaces.

The remaining three chapters constitute the second section, "Characteristics of Platinum Age of Gospel." These chapters critically analyze key elements of platinum-age gospel artists' music-making and marketing. Some gospel artists, such as Yvette Flunder, pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ in Oakland, CA, consider black gospel to be "gay music," and "church choirs have always been the province of LGBT parishioners.[23] Indeed, most women, and many male choir directors accentuated femininity in their respective gender expressions. It was

[23] Yvette Flunder provides lead vocals for the gospel classic "Thank You" on Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive IV*, CD (Malaco Records, 1990). *New Yorker* staff writer Kalefa Sanneh wrote, "In her [Flunder's] view, gospel music is gay music, with vanishingly few exceptions; she estimates that the proportion of gospel performers who are, or have been, same-gender-loving might be as high as ninety per cent." Kelefa Sanneh, "Profiles: Revelations," *The New Yorker*, February 8, 2010.

Flunder tacitly confirms an interviewer's understanding, based on Sanneh's "Profiles: Revelations" article, that Flunder believes that "church choirs have always been the province of LGBT parishioners." Lisa Webster, "Gay Black Church: An Interview with Bishop Yvette Flunder," *Religion Dispatches*, November 10, 2010, accessed April 25, 2017, http://religiondispatches.org/gay-black-church-an-interview-with-bishop-yvette-flunder/.

very rare for women in gospel and church music ministry to transgress gender norms with regard to dress, coiffure, and comportment; men usually exercised a greater range of gender expression, even among prominent churches and other ecclesial platforms.[24] Consequently, male worship leaders and gospel front men were often forced to confront the stigmatized stereotypes of homosexuality and lack of masculinity, because men with feminine gender expressions were usually assumed to also be gay.[25]

Chapters 3 and 4 illumine the ways in which crossover gospel artists conformed to heteronormative gender and sexuality expression in their outreach to black mainstream audiences. The effect was a kind of monetization of sexualized exhibitions of gospel music. In this case, heterosexuality was most profitable. I do question the efficacy of self-sexualization for evangelistic purposes.

To be fair, gospel artists saw themselves as reclaiming sexuality from the clasps of those who would still consider anything sexual to be somehow perverse. Some artists argued that they were helping to destigmatize sexuality in conservative church spaces. At the same time, self-sexualization for evangelistic purposes is both gratuitous and dangerous. By comparison, every preacher should know that she is often in danger of being misinterpreted. What one says may not

[24] Even with a number of traditional female gospel vocalists rumored or known to be lesbian, only one black female gospel artist—traditional or contemporary—is known for not conforming to gender norms. To wit, contemporary praise and worship artist Preashea Hilliard generally wears masculine attire, especially by gospel's highly feminine standards.

[25] I am referencing sociologist's Erving Goffman's definition of stigma, as well as social psychologist Claude Steele's reference to stigmatized identities in his discussion of stereotype threat. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1986); Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*.

always be what the listeners hear. The same is the case with singers of the gospel; self-sexualization leaves too much to be misinterpreted by the audience.

The de facto acceptable genders are *male* and *female* in the gospel industry. Even with these tacit restraints on gospel artists, gender and sexuality expression may vary greatly among artists. Yet, I have no record of any transgender national gospel artists. Among all the artists that I interviewed, none broached the subject of gender fluidity. Furthermore, my participant observations and personal experience bore witness to significant differences between experiences of the two predominant gender groups. Consequently, I devote chapter three to women's performances of accessibility, and chapter four to that of men.

The third chapter, "Sexy for Jesus: Accessible Performance of Gospel Music," examines gospel duo Mary Mary's work to cross over artists' commitment to black mainstream audiences. While the third chapter focuses on female gospel artists' crossover efforts through performance of accessibility, the fourth chapter addresses male gospel artists in the platinum age. This chapter, entitled "He Sure Does Move His Hips A Lot:" Kirk Franklin's Performance of Accessibility," outlines the rise of gospel artist Kirk Franklin as the premiere gospel artist and the exemplar of platinum-age gospel performance among men. The gospel duo Mary Mary, along with gospel singers CeCe Winans and Yolanda Adams were chief architects of accessible performance for women in gospel. Kirk Franklin practically singlehandedly defined performance of accessibility for male gospel artists seeking to crossover to black mainstream markets.

The fifth chapter, "Great God, God's Friends, and the Global Idiom of Crossover Praise and Worship Music" explores national praise-and-worship artists in the platinum age who used accessible performances to: cross over from black, churched audiences to white Christian

audiences, in the case of Israel Houghton and Donnie McClurkin; and bring white American praise and worship to black church audiences, in the case of Fred Hammond. Praise and worship music has become the predominant liturgical music in black evangelical churches, and a lingua franca in Pentecostal and charismatic churches the world over.

Finally, the Conclusion suggests what can be expected in the future of gospel music as more pastors encourage the recalibration of piety, and as gospel artists adjust their ministry and marketing strategies to adapt to the changing music industry. Even as the music industry writ large continues to adjust to digital media, one thing remains certain. Gospel music has and will continue to provide markers of social and theological change. In this way, gospel is not just entertainment; it is a window into the world of black American Christianity.

Conclusion

As I continue to study and compose gospel music, I often think of that childhood moment listening to the clock radio, which was so profound for me. In my dissertation research, I have learned that Andraé Crouch's twin sister Sandra Crouch actually composed that song that I have esteemed so highly since my childhood. My dissertation research has deepened my appreciation for gospel and its unique place in African American religious and popular culture. As a preacher, scholar, and musician, I am continuously required to analyze, deconstruct, and critique the music. Even so, I still cherish precious moments of simply listening to the beauty birthed of artists striving to both sound and stir heaven in synchronicity.

Chapter 1
The Rise of the Platinum Age

When the legendary gospel singer-songwriter Andraé Crouch died Thursday, January 8, 2015, the websites of major news outlets including *CNN*, *USA Today*, and *Christianity Today* published obituaries. The White House even issued a statement:

> Michelle and I were saddened to learn of the passing of music legend Pastor Andraé Crouch. Pastor Crouch grew up the son of a minister in California and discovered at a young age that he was blessed with extraordinary musical talent which would lead to an iconic career that spanned over 50 years. As a leading pioneer of contemporary gospel music, the soulful classics that Pastor Crouch created over the years have uplifted the hearts and minds of several generations and his timeless influence continues to be felt in not only gospel but a variety of music genres. We are grateful that his music and spirit will continue to live on for years to come and our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and fans during this time.[26]

President Obama pinpointed Crouch's legacy as a trailblazer in contemporary gospel music.[27] Pastor Crouch was nothing less than a father of contemporary gospel. Some of his classic works can be found in a wide array of hymnals, including the United Methodist Hymnal and the African American Heritage Hymnal.[28] Although written in the early 1970s, both "Bless His Holy

[26] The White House, "Statement by the President on the Passing of Andrae Crouch," 2015.

[27] The American gospel music industry, just as popular music, is racially segregated. On the Billboard charts, for example, gospel music that is typically recorded by and for black people is labeled "gospel," and music typically by and for white people is labeled "Christian." In this dissertation, the term *gospel music*, refers to black gospel music unless otherwise specified.

[28] C. Michael Hawn, "History of Hymns: My Tribute - GBOD | Equipping World-Changing Disciples," accessed January 17, 2015, http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-my-tribute.

Name" and "My Tribute" (also known as "To God Be the Glory") are still sung in churches the world over. Crouch's repertoire was ubiquitous among churches across denomination, race, color, and even nation, and he worked with some of pop music's most celebrated artists. Only since the 1990s have any black gospel artists besides the Hawkins Singers approached the commercial and crossover success that Crouch had attained.

This chapter illumines the dawning of a new age in gospel when a cadre of black gospel artists garnered commercial and crossover success resembling that of Andraé Crouch. I call this period *the platinum age of gospel*. This appellation refers to the striking increase in marketing and distribution of gospel music to mainstream audiences, which resulted in a significant spike in platinum-certified gospel album sales.[29]

This chapter will show that the platinum age of gospel is defined by the industry's concerted efforts to crossover to black popular and white Christian markets. While the gospel music industry has always reflected and been affected by popular music industry and culture, the gospel industry's definitive turn toward mainstream markets in the late 1980s and early 1990s catalyzed the platinum age.

The influx of mainstream recording and distribution companies into the black gospel industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s encouraged and funded platinum-age crossover efforts, namely: marketing and distribution to black R&B and hip hop music consumers who otherwise would not patronize gospel; gospel artists' entertainment portfolio diversification; lyrical

[29] An album or single must sell one million units to receive platinum certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

ambiguity; and adoption of hip hop music and culture.[30] This chapter focuses on this history of crossover. Other chapters will elucidate characteristics of platinum-age gospel.

Black Gospel Music History

African American sacred music can be traced back to the music and culture of the enslaved peoples of African descent who were forcibly transported to the United States in the transatlantic slave trade. In the first half of the nineteenth century, African musical and spiritual sensibilities merged with the Christian doctrine espoused on the plantations and in the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening. This merger resulted in an African American Christianity distinct from that of white Americans. This new practice of Christianity was marked by ring shouts and call-and-response singing of spirituals, and it was preserved in hush harbor gatherings of the "invisible institution."[31]

After emancipation in the United States, the Fisk Jubilee singers led the way in westernizing spirituals, or applying a Classical arrangement to the music of the enslaved, in order to appeal to the ears of white Americans and Europeans. The resulting "concertized spirituals" eventually gained renown among white audiences the world over, as well as among the African American churches that desired to assimilate to Western liturgical practices and music forms.

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[30] I use the terms *secular* and *secularization* in the way that black evangelicals and black gospel artists use these terms to denote popular music and culture (*secular*) and adoption or appropriation of mainstream culture versus music in church culture and music (*secularization*).

[31] To understand slave religion, see Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

In the 1920s, black Pentecostals began to mix Christian texts with blues music forms to produce gospel music. Yet, the music did not take hold in congregations among the black middle class until the 1930s when Chicagoan blues musician Thomas Dorsey codified this "gospel blues" music in the respectable urban Baptist churches of Chicago. He spread gospel music across the country through his connection with the National Baptist Convention, his practice of publishing and selling sheet music with the aid of industrious Pentecostal women such as Sallie Martin, and his co-founding of the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choirs (NCGCC Inc.).

Following the introduction of the gospel blues in Baptist and other churches that had earlier opposed this type of music, gospel reached its golden age (1945-1965), the period in which gospel music attained notoriety in popular culture, both in the USA and abroad. Artists such as Clara Ward and the Ward Singers and Mahalia Jackson gained international fame during this period. The works of gospel historians Bob Darden, Anthony Heilbut, Jerma Jackson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Horace Clarence Boyer, Michael Harris, and ethnomusicologist Mellonee Burnim all provide accounts of the gospel music's history as outlined above.[32]

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[32] See Robert Darden, *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Bob Darden, *Nothing but Love in God's Water: Black Sacred Music from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014); Anthony Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times*, 6th Limelight ed., 25th anniversary (New York; Milwaukee, Wis.: Limelight Editions; Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2002); Jerma A. Jackson, *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition*, The Abraham Lincoln Lecture Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Mellonee V. Burnim, "Religious Music," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51–77; Boyer, *The Golden Age of Gospel*; Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997); Michael W. Harris, *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey In the Urban Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Historiography

Gospel music scholars tend to divide gospel music into two broad categories: traditional and contemporary; most of the scholarship on gospel music to date has focused on traditional gospel. Ethnomusicologist Mellonee Burnim marks the commencement of the contemporary gospel period as 1969, with the crossover success of the Edwin Hawkins Singers' single "Oh Happy Day."[33] To be clear, the golden age of gospel (1945-1965) is part of the traditional gospel period (1920s-1969).[34] The platinum age of gospel (1993-2013) is a subset of the contemporary gospel period (1969-present). Just as the golden age is a period in which traditional gospel was at its height of popularity, the platinum age of gospel marks a high point in the popularity of contemporary gospel (Figure 1.1).

[33] Although we are now in the contemporary era of gospel music, traditional gospel music has not ceased to be rendered or composed; the scope of gospel just expands with each new subgenre. See Horace Clarence Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 7 (1979): 5–58; Mellonee Burnim, "The Gospel Music Industry," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 416–29.

[34] Horace Clarence Boyer's *The Golden Age of Gospel* (2000) remains a seminal text on traditional gospel music. Boyer defines the "golden age" of gospel music as the time period spanning 1945-1965, and provides an expansive text that introduces the reader to gospel artists of the golden age. Boyer's *The Golden Age of Gospel* (2000) was originally published in 1995 as *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel*.

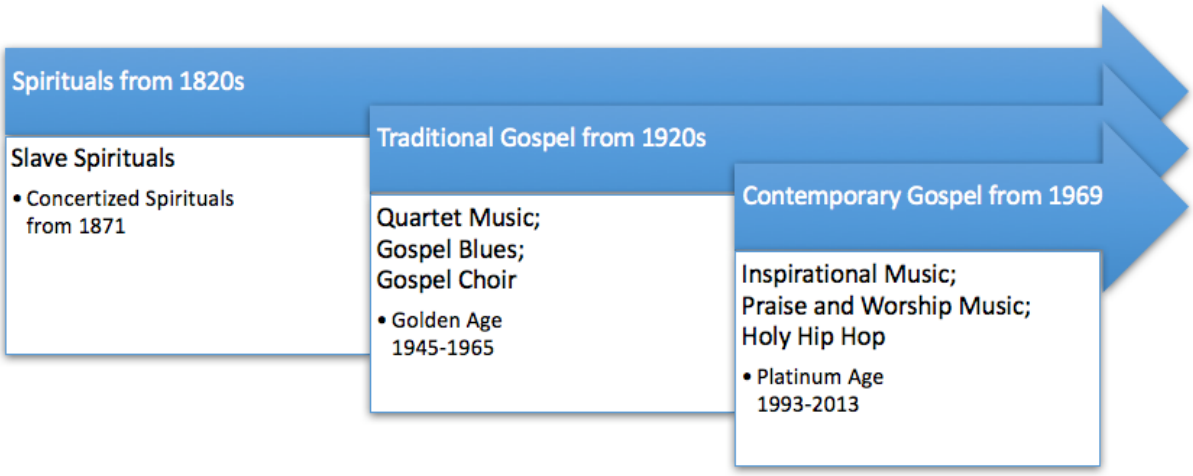


Figure 1.1 African American Sacred Music Over Time

Religion and music historian Jerma Jackson brings attention to the work of gospel pioneers in what she calls "the world of commerce."[35] Jackson explores the commercial success of gospel artists such as Thomas Dorsey and Rosetta Tharpe, who made music in secular venues. Jackson argues that after World War II, traditional gospel saw increased commercialization as record companies, both major labels and many startups, began to invest in gospel recording. Yet, in the late 1940s, 50s, and 60s, national gospel artists who dared either to take their music to the nightclubs (Clara Ward and Rosetta Tharpe, for example) or to sing popular music (Sam Cooke and Rosetta Tharpe) were struggling to maintain commercial success without alienating the churchgoers and pastors who were their original supporters.[36]

[35] Jackson, *Singing in My Soul*, 132.

[36] Many scholars have hailed Clara Ward as a major figure in the golden age because of her unprecedented success as a gospel artist in secular markets. Furthermore, she and her group, the Ward Singers, are credited with moving female gospel artists away from traditional choir robes to costumes such as the Ward Singers' bejeweled gowns and eye-catching wigs. Given Ward's success and influence on gospel music and its industry, as well as her influence on legendary soul singer Aretha Franklin, it is

This dissertation picks up the discussion of the gospel industry where Jackson's *Singing in My Soul* ends. Prior to the 1980s, the black gospel music industry was dominated by small labels. By the late 1980s, however, major labels had bought many of the smaller labels.[37] Gospel historian Bob Darden states that "four labels in particular emerged to fill the void" left when smaller labels folded or were bought out: Capitol; Warner; Columbia/CBS; and MCA. Initially, these four major labels did not want to invest in gospel.[38] The unexpected success of the Hawkins Singers' "Oh Happy Day" helped to turn the tide back in gospel's favor among record companies.[39] At a major label, artists had more access to distribution and marketing to mainstream audiences, and gospel artists were taking advantage of the resources. This time, however, unlike their post-World War II counterparts, gospel artists received acceptance at megachurches and the major gospel and denominational conventions. Of course, megachurches and denominational conventions provided exposure gospel artists access to large pools of potential customers. Beyond this access to churched audiences, the newfound ecclesial support

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surprising that no scholar has dedicated a book-length volume on Ward. Clara Ward's older sister and member of the Ward Singers, Willa Ward-Royster, has authored a memoir, *How I Got Over: Clara Ward and the World-Famous Ward Singers*, which chronicles the celebrated and scandalized events that marked the rise and decline of the Ward Singers. Willa Ward-Royster and Toni Rose, *How I Got Over: Clara Ward and the World-Famous Ward Singers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

[37] For example, Mississippi-based R&B label Malaco purchased Savoy, former home of gospel all-stars such as James Cleveland, The Caravans, and Shirley Ceasar. Ron Wynn, "Malaco/Savoy," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Winter 1989, 9.

[38] Darden, *People Get Ready!*, 290–91.

[39] By 1991, there were three major players in (white) Christian music, and two of them had been bought by a major label. Sparrow Records, founded as a Christian music label, was still privately owned, ABC/Cap Cities had purchased Word Records, and Harper & Row had acquired Benson. Bob Darden, "Billy Ray Hearn: His Eye Is on the Sparrow," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, January 1991, 19–20.

(or tolerance in some cases) allowed gospel artists to cross boundaries into mainstream entertainment without the career-ending ramifications that artists such as Rosetta Tharpe faced in the past.[40]

Heilbut describes golden-age gospel artists as not fully reaping the financial benefits of the popular music industry but having music aesthetics that were being emulated by popular music artists.[41] According to Heilbut, traditional gospel artists during that period, were poor, for the most part, and so were the majority of black people who filled churches and auditoriums to hear those artists sing. Bob Darden also suggests that both the spirituals and gospel music were folk expressions of an oppressed people.[42] While Darden and Heilbut focus on traditional gospel, they help to identify differences between golden-age traditional artists and contemporary artists in the platinum age.

On the other hand, Deborah Smith Pollard, a humanities professor and award-winning gospel music announcer (gospel radio disc jockey or host), emphasizes continuity of tradition from older periods of gospel up to the present as she focuses entirely on contemporary gospel in her book *When the Church Becomes Your Party: Contemporary Gospel Music* (2008). Pollard explores five particular aspects of the contemporary gospel music industry—namely "Praise and worship music, gospel musical stage plays, the changing dress code, women gospel announcers,

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[40] Jonathan Walton suggests that perhaps the difference is about scope of integration with contemporary culture, rather than a dramatic theological shift.

[41] Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*.

[42] Darden, *People Get Ready!*, 6. While both Bob Darden and Anthony Heilbut have illuminated the commercialization of gospel before 1969, they have not focused their scholarly attention on the contrasts between traditional and contemporary gospel music and industry. In fact, they have both focused their scholarly attention on traditional gospel.

and holy hip hop."[43] Don Cusic also emphasizes the cyclic nature of gospel music in which gospel: draws from secular music; is initially criticized in churches; and is finally accepted and codified.[44] In contrast, my work argues that despite the continuity and cyclical nature of gospel, the platinum age is a distinct period marked by both platinum-certified® commercial successes for at least a half dozen artists, and a cultural shift that cannot be explained by Cusic's suggested cycle of secularization and codification.

The Platinum Age of Gospel

The platinum age of gospel commenced with both the 1993 release of gospel artist Kirk Franklin's project *Kirk Franklin and The Family* and the platinum-certified success of BeBe and CeCe Winans's album *Different Lifestyles*. Although the Edwin Hawkins Singers' crossover selection "Oh Happy Day" went gold in 1969, it was not until the 1990s, that a half dozen gospel

[43] Deborah Smith Pollard, *When the Church Becomes Your Party: Contemporary Gospel Music*, African American Life Series (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 3.

[44] Don Cusic, *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel Music* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990).

artists achieved platinum sales.[45] The following table (Table 1.1) identifies platinum gospel recordings certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).[46]

Table 1.1 RIAA-Certified Platinum Gospel Recordings, Sorted by Certification Date

Artist	Title	Release Date	Certification Date	Label	Award Description
Aretha Franklin	Amazing Grace	01/01/72	08/26/92	Atlantic	Platinum
Aretha Franklin	Amazing Grace	01/01/72	08/26/92	Atlantic	2.00x Multi Platinum
Bebe & Cece Winans	Different Lifestyles	06/24/91	10/20/93	Capitol	Platinum
Take 6	Take 6	03/08/88	06/14/94	Reprise	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	Kirk Franklin & The Family	06/21/93	11/14/95	Gospo Centric/Emi Christian	Platinum

[45] Burnim states that "Oh Happy Day" went platinum. Furthermore, gospel historian Don Cusic states, "When [the RIAA has] proclaimed a record gold, it means that one million copies of the single or 500,000 copies of an album has been sold." Burnim, "The Gospel Music Industry," 419; Cusic, *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel Music*, 111. Gospel historian Bob Darden states that James Cleveland had many sixteen gold-selling (500,000 units) albums and that Walter Hawkins's *Love Alive III* sold 3 million units. Darden, *People Get Ready!*, 273, 276. Gospel journalist Bill Carpenters states that Mahalia Jackson had many million-selling singles, and gospel artist Alexander Bradford also had a million-selling recording in 1954. Carpenter also states that traditional gospel artist James Cleveland's *Peace Be Still* (*Savoy)* sold a million copies, and that Shirley Ceasar has had a number of platinum-selling recordings. Bil Carpenter, "God's Gold," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, May 1992, 11. RIAA did not establish the Platinum ® Award until 1976. According to the riaa.com searchable database, Aretha Franklin's gospel album *Amazing Grace* went gold in 1972 and then double platinum in 1992. *Ebony* Magazine states that Clara Ward "sold one million copies of a record (*Surely, God Is Able*)." "Glamour Girl of Gospel Singers," *Ebony*, October 1957. The riaa.com searchable database does not list the "Oh Happy Day" single as platinum; the single is only listed as having gone gold in 1969. The RIAA website states that gold status is for 500,000 units of a single or an album; it does not indicate that this requirement changed in the past. RIAA does not list any additional titles for any of the Hawkins, nor does it list any titles for James Cleveland. RIAA.com, "Searchable Database," *Searchable Database*, accessed December 30, 2015, http://riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?content_selector=gold-platinum-searchable-database; RIAA.com, "About the Awards - RIAA," accessed January 21, 2016, https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/about-awards/.

[46] Platinum award information is taken from RIAA.com's searchable database. All 2,907 screens of the database's data available up to December 15, 2015 were examined for gospel artists and projects. All projects are albums unless otherwise specified (video or ringtone). A "music video longform" achieves platinum sales with only 100,000 units sold. Singles and albums require 1 million units sold. RIAA.com, "RIAA Searchable Database"; RIAA.com, "About the Awards - RIAA."

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Artist	Title	Release Date	Certification Date	Label	Award Description
Kirk Franklin	Whatcha Lookin 4	04/18/96	05/28/97	Gospo Centric/Emi Christian	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	God's Property	05/27/97	07/30/97	Interscope	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	God's Property	05/27/97	03/04/98	Interscope	2.00x Multi Platinum
Soundtrack	The Prince Of Egypt	11/17/98	12/21/98	Dreamworks	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	The Nu Nation Project	09/29/98	01/20/99	Interscope	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 1998	01/27/98	01/26/99	Verity	Platinum
Fred Hammond	Pages Of Life Chapters I And II	04/28/98	04/07/99	Verity	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	The Nu Nation Project	09/29/98	03/28/00	Interscope	2.00x Multi Platinum
Yolanda Adams	Mountain High...Valley Low	09/03/99	09/14/00	Elektra	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 2000	02/08/00	03/09/01	Verity	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	God's Property	05/27/97	10/19/01	Interscope	3.00x Multi Platinum
Donnie Mcclurkin	Live In London & More	08/22/00	10/19/01	Verity	Platinum
Cece Winans	Alone In His Presence	09/28/95	12/17/01	Sparrow	Platinum
Mary Mary	Thankful	05/02/00	12/17/01	Columbia	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 2001	02/06/01	04/03/02	Verity	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 1999	01/12/99	05/19/03	Verity	Platinum
Kirk Franklin	The Rebirth Of Kirk Franklin	02/19/02	05/19/03	Gospo Centric	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 2003	02/04/03	03/06/04	Verity	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 2004	01/27/04	09/21/05	Verity	Platinum
Various	Wow Gospel 2005	01/25/05	06/02/06	Verity/Zomba	Platinum
Donnie Mcclurkin	Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs	04/05/05	06/02/06	Verity	Platinum
Fred Hammond	Pages Of Life Chapters I And Ii	04/28/98	10/13/06	Verity	2.00x Multi Platinum
Kirk Franklin	Hero	10/04/05	12/14/06	Verity / Gospo Centric / Zomba	Platinum
Shekinah Glory Ministry	Shekinah Glory Ministry Live (Video)	12/05/05	09/17/08	Kingdom Records	Platinum
Marvin Sapp	Never Would Have Made It (Ringtone)	07/03/07	05/26/09	Verity	Platinum
Juanita Bynum	A Piece Of My Passion	01/16/06	06/26/13	Flow Records	Platinum

Gospel journalist Lisa Collins stated her August 1999 article "The State of the Gospel Music Industry:"

> Truth is, it's Gospel manufacturers who have been enjoying a payday as sales across the board—traditional to urban contemporary—are way up. "When I started doing this, Gospel Gold was 50,000 units," reports Roger Holmes, owner of Sierra Management, which counts among its clients [gospel artists] Richard Smallwood and Donnie McClurkin. "We've got a good number of artists regularly selling over 200,000 units. Donnie is close to 400,000 units, CeCe [Winans] has got to be nearing gold (500,000 units) and presales for Richard's album were at 85,000. First-week sales of "Healing: Live In Detroit" [*sic*] (Richard Smallwood) were 5500 [*sic*] units, which is astounding.
>
> Then there is Gospel's growing television presence. Kirk Franklin's Easter Sunday Pay-Per-View Concert and subsequent PBS special garnered a near 40% penetration during Black Music Month.[47]

Collins made clear that gospel manufacturers were seeing increased profit due to the substantial uptick in gospel sales. While population increase (more consumers) and technological advances (especially the introduction of the compact disc) can account for part of the rise in record sales, this does not fully explain the phenomenal increase.[48] Rather, the intentional marketing and distribution to mainstream and global audiences were at the root of this sales spike.

Prior to the 1990s, the black American gospel music industry operated relatively independently from those of both popular and Christian music. To be sure, all three industries were concerned with selling recorded music. In order to make money with recorded music, one

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[47] Lisa Collins, "The State of the Gospel Music Industry 1999," *Gospel Today*, August 1999, 22–23.

[48] According to the Gospel Music Association, Christian/gospel music sales in the United States totaled nearly $500 million in 2008, with gospel music comprising 18% percent of all Christian/gospel album sales. GospelMusic.org, "Gospel Music Association Industry Overview 2009," accessed December 19, 2010, http://www.gospelmusic.org/images/uploads/factsForms/2009_Industry_Overview.pdf.

needed: 1) a recording to sell; 2) places to the sell the music; and 3) advertising and marketing to attract potential customers. Each industry had its own set of major record labels that dominated the enterprise of bringing music to the marketplace.

By the late 1980s, major Christian music labels were limiting their new artist rosters to artists who had already established a regional or national market.[49] In 1988, then president of Reunion Records Jeff Mosely told *Rejoice!* Magazine:

> "The artists' ministry has to already be happening in and of itself before a national record company will be interested. The artist has to have an ongoing concert ministry—at least on a regional basis—AND great talent and songs. Artists operate on a local, regional, or national basis. A national record label can work with a regional artist that CAN become national, but most record companies are not in the place to break local acts nationally." (emphasis Mosely's)[50]

To sign with a major Cristian label such as Word, however, meant distribution through the "5,000 major Christian Bookstores in the United States."[51]

The 1980s saw major technological advancements for the American music industry. Sony upgraded the Walkman, a small portable AM/FM receiver, to play the cassette tape. Sony and Phillips worked together to bring the audio CD to market, and in 1982, consumers began to see the new alternative to the cassette. Soon, cassette tapes were losing their place of primacy to the compact disc. Furthermore, major general retailers such as Walmart, Kmart, Target, Best Buy,

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[49] By the end of the new millennium's first decade, black gospel artists needed to have a market base, and especially a distribution-ready, fully produced and packaged recording, to secure a contract with a major label.

[50] Bob Darden, "New Artist Development: Reunion Records," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Summer 1988, 34.

[51] Ibid., 36.

and Circuit City were gobbling up market share from small independent "mom-and-pop" music merchants and chain music stores. Well-established distribution channels to the aforementioned national retailers provided the requisite product availability for selling millions of units.[52]

At the same time, black gospel music distribution was severely limited. Major retailers did not carry extensive collections of gospel music, if they carried the music at all. Christian retail stores were a major outlet for white Contemporary Christian music (CCM), since the mid 1970s.[53] These major Christian retail chains, such as Lifeway, carried much more white Christian music than black gospel.[54] While there were some small independent specialty music stores that carried black gospel, the artists sold a significant portion of their music at major gospel music conferences, such as: the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA); NCGCC; or any number of gospel promoter Bobby Jones's gospel workshops/retreats, as well as at national black church conventions, such as the Churches of God In Christ (COGIC) Holy Convocation.

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[52] Walmart states that by 1990, it was the nation's top retailer in general. Walmart.com, "Experience Walmart's History," accessed May 6, 2015, http://corporate.walmart.com/our-story/history/history-timeline.

[53] Don Cusic, "Sandi Patti," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Spring 1988, 6.

[54] Speaking about white American Christian music in 1989, the editor of gospel magazine *Rejoice!* stated "Christian bookstores and secular record stores don't stock their shelves equally with all types of gospel; that basic fact affects sales. Southern [white] Gospel and various types of black gospel have experienced limited exposure [in Christian bookstores and secular record stores]." Cheryl Thurber, "From the Editor (Editor's Column)," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Winter 1989, 2. Further, Patricia Bates's September 26, 1998 *Billboard* article explains that the Baptist Book Stores chain was rebranding as "Lifeway," and that Lifeway's "gospel" music stock accounted for 10% of music inventory, while "contemporary Christian" music accounted for 55%. Patricia Bates, "New Name of Baptist Book Stores to Show Wide Focus.," *Billboard* 110, no. 39 (September 26, 1998): 129.

Mainstream music industry executives began to notice the rising popularity of niche genres such as black gospel in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Major pop labels began buying up the boutique gospel labels, and in turn invested money and management into gospel projects for mainstream consumption. When large corporations, and savvy start-ups began to focus on gospel music in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they moved product through the same distribution channels that hip hop music was using—thereby circumventing Christian retailers as they took gospel music to mainstream consumers through Walmart, Circuit City, Target, and the like. This new distribution, coupled with the push for spins on black popular radio, resulted in unprecedented success for a number of gospel artists.[55]

The End of the Platinum Age

Record companies significantly reduced the funding to promote and distribute black gospel music in mainstream markets after 2008. Gospel industry executive Monica Coates lays the facts bare:

> Let's do the uncomfortable math: There are hundreds of aspiring Gospel artists hoping to get a record deal every year. At the same time, there are only four to five major labels in business at any one time, each with a maximum roster of twenty to thirty artists, most of whom are currently under long-term contracts.[56]

[55] Certainly, the increase in 24-hour black gospel FM radio stations during the 1990s also helped to spread contemporary gospel to consumers in major radio markets in US cities with large black populations.

[56] Monica A. Coates, *The Beginner's Guide to the Gospel Music Industry: A Handbook for Aspiring Artists and Industry Executives* (Franklin, TN: Paul Marchell Publishing, 2009), 86. Monica Coates worked with Fred Hammond and ran Kirk Franklin's record label before taking on the position of Vice President of A&R at Motown Gospel in 2016. GMA, "NEWS: Motown Gospel Appoint Monica Coates And EJ Gaines To Senior Management Positions," *The Gospel Music Association*, September 13, 2016, accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.gospelmusic.org/news-motown-gospel-appoint-monica-coates-and-ej-gaines-to-senior-management-positions/.

This decline in funding was spurred by America's Great Recession, beginning in late 2007, and the rise of streaming audio. In the article "Revenge of the Record Labels," *Forbes* writers Zack O'Malley Greenburg and Nick Messitte imply that Napster's founding in 2002 marked the beginning of the end of the CD's reign as preferred music medium.[57] They explain the shift from physical CD to digital purchasing and streaming:

> Total U.S. album sales peaked at 785 million in 2000—the year after a pair of teenagers named Shawn Fanning and Sean Parker created Napster, which allowed anyone with a computer and a reasonably fast Web connection to trade music. By 2008 annual album sales had plummeted 45%. Between then and now, even as the labels reined in illegal downloading, sales dropped another 40% to 257 million. That means, at $15 per album, the industry is currently taking in $7.9 billion less in annual retail sales than it was a decade and a half ago. Initially, the labels' response was to fight piracy in court and to fold into one another. There were six majors in 1999; now [2015] there are three [Sony, Universal, and Warner].[58]

As labels tightened budgets, gospel artists' continued preoccupation with fashioning their ministries after white Christian and black popular tastes—well into the 2010s—may have been misguided. It may well have been worth turning primary ministry and marketing attention back toward black churchgoing consumers. The last gospel project to receive RIAA platinum certification was the praise and worship music CD *A Piece of My Passion* by Juanita Bynum, a televangelist and singer who rose to fame among black Christians during the 1990s for her candid teachings in a videotaped sermon series *No More Sheets*. With years having passed since

[57] Zack O'Malley Greenburg and Nick Messitte, "Revenge of the Record Labels," *Forbes*, May 4, 2015.

[58] Ibid.

the previous platinum-selling gospel recording, *A Piece of My Passion*'s platinum certification in 2013 marked the end of the platinum age.[59]

Gospel Crossover

Most of the gospel soloists, duos, or groups who achieved platinum success since the 1990s did so as a result of crossing over from black church audiences to black mainstream and white Christian markets.[60] Portia Maultsby defines "crossover" as "[t]he process by which a recording released in a secondary market achieves hit status in the mainstream market."[61] Robynn Stilwell provides a broader definition when she states that the term *crossover* is "used mainly in the music industry to refer to a recording or an artist who has moved across from one chart to another."[62] Stilwell goes on to say that, "Though ostensibly indicative of musical style, the charts also encode race, geography, class and even sexuality."[63]

Platinum-age gospel was a multi-million-dollar industry. Gospel artists and their labels worked hard to produce commodities that would inspire both Christian consumers and

[59] Gospel artist and actress Tamela Mann's single "Take Me to the King" went platinum in 2016. I still mark 2013 as the end of the platinum age, as crossover project sales had declined and remained low overall, after 2013. Mann's platinum success now appears anomalous.

[60] About a third of the platinum-selling gospel recordings are attributed to compilation and soundtrack CDs, which are comprised of a number of chart topping gospel hits from of a variety of artists.

[61] Portia K. Maultsby, "Rhythm and Blues," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 263.

[62] Robynn J. Stilwell, "Crossover," *The Grove Dictionary of American Music* (Oxford University Press, April 21, 2013).

[63] Ibid.

nonbelievers. In fact, nonbelievers were often the primary target for many contemporary gospel artists. The desire to reach mainstream American and global audiences—transcending race, denomination, and even faith in the process, most certainly affected gospel music recording, from its music forms to the religious discourses that took place in the song texts and rhetoric of the artists.

Andraé Crouch's Crossover Success

Andraé Crouch's music, along with that of the Edwin Hawkins Singers, changed the gospel landscape in the late 1960s and 1970s. As Crouch crossed over to white Christian markets, the Hawkins Singers crossed over to both white and black popular music charts with their breakout hit "Oh Happy Day." In 1982, traditional gospel artist James Cleveland highlighted the extent to which Crouch found success among white audiences, when Cleveland said, "Our paths seldom cross mainly because Crouch's audiences are 50 to 70 percent White, while mine are 95 percent Black. In the long run, I think his exposure is helpful for all of us gospel artists."[64]

Crouch was the paragon of success in crossing over to contemporary Christian Music (CCM). Bob Darden says, "Amy Grant may have made CCM popular; Andraé made it sound great."[65] Darden further states, "[T]hrough the entire 1970s, Crouch and [his group] the Disciples

[64] "Andrae Crouch Walks Line between Gospel and Pop," *Jet*, September 13, 1982, 64; Walter Rico Burrell, "The Gospel According to Andrae Crouch," *Ebony*, September 1982, 60.

[65] ChristianityToday.com, "Remembering Andrae Crouch, Dead at 72 | Christianity Today," accessed December 21, 2015, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/january-web-only/remembering-andrae-crouch-dead-at-72.html?utm_source=ctdirect-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9471879&utm_content=327302238&utm_campaign=2013.

were the best-known, best-selling group in what would be known as contemporary Christian music (CCM)."[66] Crouch's uncomplicated melodies and biblically based lyrics made his songs palatable to masses of people across race and denomination.

Crouch's participation in the Jesus Movement gave him significant exposure to white audiences.[67] Crouch was also from a mixed-race family. While it was phenotypically evident that Crouch was of African descent, he was also the grandson of German immigrants on both sides of his family. Consequently, he was interested in creating music that both his black Pentecostal and white family members could understand. Of his early compositions, Crouch said:

> In high school I attended Youth for Christ which included different races and our leader was a white guy from the Nazarene church. They would ask me from time to time to sing a song, so I would sing something that I knew they would understand. Also, my mother's and father's backgrounds both included Jewish-German with mixed marriage (Afro-European) grandparents and great-grandparents so we would have extended family gatherings that [were] racially diverse. When my dad would ask me to sing, I knew they wouldn't understand the C.O.G.I.C. style of singing. I wanted to reach my family and kids at school, so I would write my songs clearer so that they would understand the gospel instead of some of the vernacular that we use in church.[68]

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[66] Darden, *People Get Ready!*, 279.

[67] The Jesus Movement is "a popular term of the late 1960s and early 1970s for the amorphous movement of relatively spontaneous groupings, normally fervent, evangelical, and fundamentalist, which emerged in the youth culture of the period, beginning in California. The 'Jesus people', who combined much of the unconventional life-style of that culture with ethical rigorism and often millenarian expectations, widely distrusted the established Churches; many adopted Pentecostal practices and teaching. The 'Children of God' (later called the 'Family of Love'), a sect which emerged from the movement, has won adherents in Europe as well as in the USA." Taken from: F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., "Jesus Movement," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press, 2005). Jesus people's hippieish way of being, folk rock musicality, and evangelical theology of worship birthed the liturgical practice *praise and worship* among white evangelicals, which eventually spread to black churches.

[68] Vincent Allen, "Interview Dec 2002 - Andrae Crouch," 1999, accessed December 21, 2015, http://one-way.org/jesusmusic/interviews/crouch/interview.htm.

Crouch's father was a bishop and pastor in the Church of God In Christ (COGIC) denomination. This Holiness denomination had a rich musical heritage with which Crouch was undoubtedly familiar. Yet, his early exposure to other Christian traditions and faiths taught him the importance of crafting lyrics that did not merely rely on common religious tropes that pervade African American sacred music or preaching. Andraé Crouch went on to say:

> I brought some kids to church one time and they heard the singing and enjoyed it but later asked, "What does, 'Midy-lone' mean." I had to explain to them that what was being sung was "the Lord bringing us from a, 'migh-ty long'" way". [*sic*] So I found that if they were going to be blessed by what I did, I had to tell a story to bring them along with me, because I didn't want to have to explain my songs, but that they would be self-explanatory.[69]

A number of African American gospel and congregational songs employ the motif of God bringing believers "a mighty long way." The conception of Christ as a faithful friend who carries believers over long, treacherous distances in their Christian journey, as well as the necessity to "look back" or reflect on spiritual progress made possible by Christ's assistance or intervention, are common vernacular discourses in African American sacred music. For example, urban gospel artist Tye Tribbett's song "Mighty Long Way" (2004) wholly relies on this particular discourse, as does the Mississippi Mass Choir's "You Brought Me" (2005). Feedback from Crouch's young peers taught the songwriter the value of clarifying song texts for the uninitiated. Indeed, Crouch's commitment to self-explanatory lyrics was only half of his hit-making formula. In a conversation I had with the legend in 2005 at his church in California, he explained that a good song should have a simple melody that the average person could hum. At

[69] Ibid.

the height of his gospel music career in the 1970s and 80s, Crouch made classic gospel music by coupling his creatively accessible lyrics and melodies with disco and funk-inflected instrumentation.

Crouch wrote "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power" (also known as "The Blood") for the junior choir at his father's church when he was only fourteen years old.[70] By the early 1980s, the song was virtually ubiquitous in white and black American evangelical churches. Southern gospel singer Jason Crabb said, "One of the highlights of my career was to perform his [Crouch's] classic song, 'The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power,' as he played the piano during a Bill Gaither video taping. I'll never forget it."[71]

Crabb's recollection illuminates Crouch's reach to white audiences, since Bill Gaither and his wife Gloria had established themselves as the premier southern gospel hymnists of the late twentieth century. Southern gospel is Christian music primarily by white gospel artists with a sound that references white country, barbershop, and hillbilly music forms, as well as the congregational music derived from evangelical camp meetings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Gaithers' reach remained expansive even in the 2010s, with several

[70] Deborah Evans Price, "Higher Ground: Crouch's 'Mighty' Career," *Billboard - The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment*, May 26, 2006, 46. Crouch's father was a COGIC bishop and pastor. That Andraé Crouch had enough authority to write songs for the junior choir at his local church speaks to the tradition of fiercely encouraging and empowering, if not forcing, children and youth to excel as musicians and vocalists in COGIC churches.

[71] Deborah Evans Price, "R.I.P. Andrae Crouch: Remembering the Gospel Great's Immense Influence," 2015, accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6436383/andrae-crouch-remembering-gospel-great-influence. Jason Crabb and the vast majority of *Southern gospel* singers are white.

platinum-selling videos and appearances on Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and other Christian television networks.

Christian music songwriter Michael W. Smith also extolled Crouch's ability to affect (white) Christian music when he said:

> Growing up in Kenova, West Virginia – I'll never forget hearing Andrae [*sic*] for the first time…. It was like someone had opened a whole new world of possibilities for me musically. I don't think there is anyone who inspired me more, growing up, than Andre [*sic*] Crouch. The depth of his influence on Christian music is incalculable. We all owe him so much and I'll forever be grateful for the times we got to work together.[72]

This is no small accolade from one of the most prolific and influential American Christian songwriters of the last half century, especially in light of the Christian music industry's historic notoriety for resisting (and rejecting) black gospel music.

Beyond Crouch's spectacular success crossing over to Christian music charts, Crouch also collaborated with a host of acclaimed mainstream artists.[73] He provided vocals on the reputed King of Pop Michael Jackson's Grammy-nominated "Man in the Mirror" (1987) as well as Jackson's "Will You Be There" (1991). Famed rock-and-roll star Elvis Presley had already recorded Crouch's "I've Got Confidence" (1972).[74] Crouch's work on Madonna's controversial chart-topper "Like a Prayer" (1989) is perhaps his most astonishing pop music collaboration,

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Contemporary Christian music, or CCM, is Christian music primarily recorded by white gospel artists. CCM and gospel music are charted separately by Billboard.

[74] Jesse Carey, "7 Pop Hits You Didn't Know Andraé Crouch Helped Create," *RelevantMagazine.com*, 2015, accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/7-pop-hits-you-didnt-know-andra-crouch-helped-create.

since the song and especially the video, conflate Catholic saint veneration with interracial sexual desire. Of his work on the song, Crouch said,

> I never did it for popularity for myself, but I saw it as an opportunity to share the Lord with them. We did the background music, but not the video because what she wanted to do in it was too bizarre and against our faith. I don't know what effect our stand had on her, but Pat Leonard [Madonna's former music director] and I had several spiritual conversations after that.[75]

Crouch also produced selections on the soundtrack for film producer Steven Spielberg's film *The Color Purple*, and he composed the theme song for the television sitcom *Amen* which starred Sherman Hemsley—previously of *The Jeffersons* fame.[76] Crouch certainly set a stunning precedent of crossover success for platinum-age contemporary gospel artists.

Andraé Crouch's Progeny

Crouch suffered a heart attack on January 6, 2015, and he passed away five days later. The list of attendees at his memorial service and funeral was nothing short of a Who's Who in gospel and contemporary Christian music, not to mention the mainstream artists, politicians, and other dignitaries who were in attendance. Crouch's reach was global, and people from around the world came to participate in the "Special Celebration Concert" (memorial service), January 21, 2015, and the "Celebration Service" (funeral), which took place the next day. At each service, as artist after artist took the microphone and recounted experiences with Pastor Crouch, the weight

[75] Edwin Smith, "Catching Up with Andrae Crouch," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, September 1992, 7.

[76] Ibid.

of gospel history was palpable.[77] A number of artists at the memorial and funeral services also spoke of their own connections to Pastor Crouch's legacy. Crouch was never known to have married or fathered any biological children. Yet, his musical and spiritual children—claimed and illegitimate—along with a host of his musical family and friends, came to the memorial and funeral to celebrate his life and mourn his death.[78]

The funeral was officiated by Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, pastor of Faithful Central Bible Church. Pastor Marvin Winans was charged with delivering the eulogy; he sang in lieu of preaching. The live-stream of the funeral commenced with the procession of Crouch's casket to the front of the West Angeles COGIC cathedral followed by gospel artist Kurt Carr and a star-studded chorale singing Crouch's "Bless His Holy Name." It was no surprise to see Stevie Wonder participating in the funeral, since Stevie had recorded the harmonica solo on the title track of Crouch's 1979 album *I'll Be Thinking of You*. This album won the 1979 Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album Grammy, and peaked at #40 on the Billboard R&B charts in

[77] Yet, there was a conspicuous absence. Bishop Charles E. Blake Sr., presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, and pastor of West Angeles COGIC, was present for neither the memorial nor the funeral being held at the church he pastored. What does it mean when the presiding Bishop chooses not to attend the funeral of one of COGIC's most globally influential artists, and arguably one who helped to move COGIC from a marginalized Sanctified tradition to a respectable denomination? Indeed, Blake's actions could be deemed in line with Christ's directive to "let the dead bury their dead," as Bishop Blake was out of state at COGIC leadership meetings. Nevertheless, that the bishop would "phone it in," or have video remarks played at the funeral, rather than adjusting his schedule to pay respects to contemporary gospel legend Andraé Crouch, may show that the relationship between the progressive gospel artist and the Sanctified Church was still a tenuous one.

[78] Undoubtedly, Crouch helped to launch or further the career of both white and black gospel artists and musicians. I focus on the black artists who have claimed him as a spiritual progenitor in their gospel music careers, as these artists helped move gospel music into the height of the contemporary gospel music era—the platinum age.

1980.[79] The Winans family, including Bishop Elect Marvin, BeBe, and CeCe, had a significant connection to Crouch. He had given the Winans their first big break. At the memorial and funeral services, Bishop Winans shared stories of his family's enduring relationship with Pastor Crouch and even talked about their first encounters with him. BeBe also shared how his final moments with the legend impacted him.

When it was time for gospel artists Kirk Franklin and Donald Lawrence to give remarks, Bishop Ulmer introduced them by saying:

> Several years ago the contemporary creativity of Kirk Franklin and Donald Lawrence was birthed of the contemporary creativity of an Andraé Crouch. They said of him then how he was so on the edge. So ahead of his time. And these two musical sons come as a demonstration of the trans-generational influence of Andraé Crouch.[80]

Ulmer asserted that Franklin and Lawrence's respective innovations and interventions in contemporary gospel were a continuation of the pioneering work that Crouch had already done.

Donald Lawrence spoke briefly. He revealed that he had worked with Crouch in the past. Then Kirk Franklin made his way to the microphone. Franklin began his extemporaneous remarks at the funeral, saying:

> I was seven years old when I was invited to this church in Fort Worth, Texas. It was the church of a lady [whose house my adoptive mother used to clean]…. [H]er church was having a Christmas cantata. Now I'm from the hood. I had never heard of a cantata; I didn't really know what that was. And I went, and I was on program at this church. And, I was part of their big festival, and they had a dress rehearsal. And, at the dress rehearsal, when I finished doing whatever it is that I was doing, there was a white guy that walked up to me. And, he said, "Man,

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[79] AllMusic.com, "I'll Be Thinking of You - Andraé Crouch & His Disciples | Awards," accessed January 22, 2015, http://www.allmusic.com/album/ill-be-thinking-of-you-mw0000620782/awards.

[80] *Andraé Crouch Celebration of Life Service (Funeral)*, Live Stream, 2015.

> you're good." He said, "When you grow up, you're going to be the next Andraé Crouch." I had never heard of Andraé Crouch.[81]

Franklin made it clear that he had not been a student of Andraé Crouch. In fact, Kirk Franklin helped to usher in an entirely new sound in contemporary gospel music during the 1990s, even though he was no student of gospel music as a child. Franklin went on to say, "I was seven years old, and the music that influenced me was [rap group] Run-DMC, and P-Funk, and the [R&B group] Commodores. And, I'd never heard of Andraé Crouch." It became clear that Franklin had only recently learned of Crouch's importance when he said:

> [B]ecause he was so huge in the white community, … he was such a big superstar, that when they said that [I would be the next Andraé Crouch], I had no idea of the impact of those words. Those were big words. And it's amazing how your journey in life can bring you to a place like this where somebody would even call you and see a little bit in you to even stand in the midst of all these great people and great music. Music that every time y'all sing a song, I'm nudging Donnie [McClurkin] saying, he wrote that too?" Songs that I thought growing up in a Baptist church were just standard Baptist songs. I thought these were … hymn songs. I had no idea that a guy who was packing out Carnegie Hall and the big arenas in London, and was selling out tours all over the place…. I had no idea of his impact. And so, to be able to have an opportunity to stand here and just be overwhelmed that some guy said something to me when I was seven years old, that I've still not caught up to yet, is far beyond me.[82]

Ulmer's statement that Kirk Franklin and Donald Lawrence were the musical sons of Andraé Crouch is important, because Franklin and Lawrence represent two of the three main subgenres of contemporary gospel music that have grown significantly since the 1990s. The three main subgenres are:

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

1) *Crossover gospel*, or to resurrect a term from gospel's golden age, *pop-gospel*. This is gospel and inspirational music written with the intent to market to mainstream audiences for popular chart placement and even rotation in clubs;

2) Praise and worship music; or music used in worship services to facilitate transformative encounter with Christ, derived from white evangelical gospel music of the same name; and

3) Contemporary choir music.[83]

Franklin had become the male face of platinum-age crossover gospel, as Donald Lawrence had helped to define the look and sound of contemporary gospel choirs. Beyond this, both Lawrence and Franklin were two of the most influential songwriters and producers of gospel's platinum-age.

New Crossover Initiatives in the Platinum Age

Crouch's musical progeny—including BeBe & CeCe Winans, Kirk Franklin, and Fred Hammond, ushered in the platinum age. If Andraé Crouch was doing in the 1970s what his progeny were doing in the 1990s, why is the platinum age a distinct period in gospel music history, and why is it important to study this period? The answer is simple. Several platinum-age artists realized unprecedented success in the 1990s and beyond, not just a few artists as in previous gospel eras. These platinum-age artists sold millions of albums *individually*. Also, while Crouch did not advertise his collaboration with mainstream artists, platinum-age gospel artists openly collaborated with popular singers and musicians. Equally important, platinum-age

[83] I do not list holy hip hop here, because holy hip hop has proliferated outside of the marketing and distribution of black gospel music's mainstream. For example, in 2015, it was still difficult for hip hop gospel artists to get airplay on black gospel radio, unless it was during a (usually off-hour) hip-hop gospel segment.

artists' integration in secular spaces and popular entertainment was allowed and even validated by ecclesial leadership. Prior to the platinum age, such "worldly" artistic ventures would have threatened most gospel artists' relationships with black pastors and churches. This was a new day in gospel music—gospel artists could boldly go where they had only sporadically gone before. Even sexual indiscretions made public were rarely career ending.

This period was so unique, not because of a newfound boldness or creativity in the artists, but because church leaders in Pentecostal traditions revised longstanding theologies of sanctification to allow for gospel artists to live much more unapologetically. Pentecostal liturgical practices became normative among black megachurches of various denominations, and the definitions of public and private piety became less prohibitive in black Pentecostal megachurches. These marked shifts in large black denominations and megachurches allowed crossover artists to take platinum-age gospel to the world.[84] These ecclesial shifts coupled with radical redirection of gospel music marketing to mainstream audiences caused the contemporary gospel artist to present a sound and persona that aligned with black popular culture more than ever before.

In this dissertation, I expand the definitions of the terms *churched* and *unchurched* to encompass more than just those who are either connected or unconnected to a church, respectively. A "churched person" is: one who is very familiar with, if not a participant in, a predominantly black evangelical church; or one who is acculturated to traditional gospel music,

[84] Chapter 2 details theological shifts. This chapter deals with the black gospel industry's new focus on crossing over.

which is steeped in African American Christian ritual and discourse. This definition of *churched* encompasses both churchgoers and gospel aficionados not connected to a church. Conversely, an "unchurched" person is: one who is uninitiated into black evangelical church culture and music; one who has negative sentiments toward Christianity in general or a black church in particular; or one who otherwise has no knowledge of or predilection for gospel music.

The Different Lifestyles Album

While Andraé Crouch's career represented unprecedented crossover to white Christian markets, the Hawkins represented crossover to popular markets. The Hawkins had achieved crossover to black and white popular charts with the song "Oh Happy Day," which was the remake of a hymn declaring the salvific work of Jesus Christ. No other gospel artists were having that type of success crossing over to the pop charts. While the RIAA only lists "Oh Happy Day" as gold, the single is widely accepted among gospel scholars as having achieved platinum success. (This uncertified platinum success may be a result of sales on compilation cassettes and CDs, and other sales not tabulated by RIAA.) Whether gold or platinum certified, the song proved to be a stunning and unpredicted success for the Hawkins Singers. The Hawkins kicked down the door between gospel and popular music, but no other gospel artists seemed to walk through until the early 1990s. That is when, in 1993—some twenty-four years after the Hawkins Singers—BeBe and CeCe Winans achieved platinum sales of their crossover gospel album *Different Lifestyles* (released in 1991).

Benjamin (BeBe) and Priscilla (CeCe) Winans were younger siblings of the four brothers who formed contemporary gospel group The Winans. BeBe and CeCe cut their teeth as

professional singers on the *PTL* show hosted by Jim and Tammy Bakker in the early 1980s. Their older brother Marvin Winans recommended them when he and his brothers were unable to commit to the long-term gig themselves. *PTL* was the flagship television broadcast of the Bakkers, Christian television moguls who were building a Christian entertainment juggernaut targeting evangelicals.[85]

As regular singers on the show, BeBe and CeCe cultivated an evangelical audience. During their tenure as *PTL* singers, the duo recorded "Lord, Lift Us Up" on *PTL*'s record label. Rocked by scandal, *PTL* ended in the mid-1980s. Eventually BeBe and CeCe were able to secure a record deal with Christian record label Sparrow, whose rostrum featured Steven Curtis Chapman.[86] BeBe and CeCe found popularity among the "young adult contemporary audience" which the label targeted.[87] In 1987, they released a self-titled album, which was still a bestseller for Sparrow some fifteen months after its debut.[88] The brother-and-sister team followed *BeBe and CeCe Winans* with *Heaven* in 1988. With both albums, the siblings were creating music that appealed to gospel listeners as well as contemporary Christian audiences. By 1990, the siblings

[85] While the tacit or implicit target for programming developed by the Bakkers may have been white American evangelicals, I remember from personal experience that there were certainly black American churchgoers among the faithful viewers.

[86] Bob Darden, "Go Tell It on the Mountain: Marketing the Music of Michael W. Smith and Tim Miner," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Winter 1989, 17.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., 18.

were "very well known" in gospel markets in Scandinavia, West Germany, Holland, and England, and they were looking to expand their presence to Poland and Russia.[89]

The brother-sister duo released *Different Lifestyles* in 1991. The album's mix was clean and bright, as one would expect for a digital, rather than analog, recording. The instrumentation for the album was highly synthesized and drew largely from the late 1980s pool of synthesized sounds, especially on the first track "Depend on You" and the hallmark track "Addictive Love." "Depend on You" also featured a reverberation effect on the snare drum that was standard for pop production especially during the mid to late 1980s.

Beyond all the pop instrumentation, the album had another very important characteristic; the lyrics were intentionally ambiguous concerning the object of adoration in many songs. The Hawkins boldly sang lyrics such as "Jesus Christ is the Way," and "Oh Happy Day, since Jesus washed my sins away." Crouch composed songs declaring "every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, that Jesus is the Lord." In a significant departure from that gospel norm, BeBe and CeCe sang in the second person *without* clarifying proper nouns. The object of affection in many of their songs was open to interpretation by the listener, for at least some portion of the song. This helped to make the music accessible for secular spaces. These songs were viable for black popular radio and could be played in the car or the nightclub. The strategy paid off for BeBe and CeCe. Within two years, *Different Lifestyles* had achieved platinum success.

[89] Dionizy Piatkowski, "BeBe and CeCe Winans in East Europe," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Fall 1990, 21.

In her autobiography *On a Positive Note* (2000), CeCe Winans talked about the criticism she and her brother received for their brand of "inspirational" and gospel music.

> Despite the numerous awards our music has garnered, not all the critics have been taken with our brand of inspirational songs. Some of the criticism has been downright harsh and cruel, and I would be less than honest if I said that it hasn't hurt. Many have criticized the contemporary urban sound and tone of our music as not constituting authentic gospel music. It was naive of us, but when we started singing we anticipated the enthusiastic support of the church. We thought the church would be happy that we were spreading the gospel message with a sound with which youth could identify, but we were wrong. We have been accused of selling out gospel, of not being Christian enough, of not loving God, and of just being after the money. Those were really hard. Some of our worst criticism has come from those in the church.
>
> All we have ever wanted to do was to sing songs that were in our hearts, songs that ministered to and encouraged people, and songs that glorified the power and presence of the Lord. For years gospel was done one way, and it was missing a lot of people. I love the traditional songs. I grew up singing great hymns like "Amazing Grace," and "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." But I know that everyone doesn't have the religious background that I have had. So as products of our generation we have created sounds that catch younger people who might otherwise never hear about the Lord or never hear positive lyrics. We were two kids who grew up on the contemporary happening gospel sounds of Andrae [*sic*] Crouch, Walter and Edwin Hawkins, and Rance Allen, who loved God and did the music we loved. Contemporary music was nothing new for us.[90]

It is no surprise that CeCe Winans faced harsh criticisms in the early 1990s, as she had been raised in a Pentecostal denomination (COGIC). Chapter 2 explains that she and other crossover gospel artists were able to find support among black megachurch leaders, however. CeCe Winans went on to say:

> Songs like our 1991 "Addictive Love" or the remake of the Staple Singers' song "I'll Take You There" might never have gotten sung if we had allowed ourselves to be paralyzed by the criticism. Both songs charged to the top of the R & B [*sic*] single charts as well as national Christian radio charts. Evidently

[90] CeCe Winans and Renita J. Weems, *On a Positive Note* (Atria, 2000), 171–72.

> audiences, both the Christian and secular, have disagreed with the critics and found our message of hope captivating and inspirational. It's music from the heart, and I think that's why it goes straight to the hearts of others. *That both songs achieved platinum status and topped the charts helped to confirm for us that our music was reaching people just as God intended.* I think about all the criticism we have endured over the years, those who want to draw a sharp line between different kinds of music, and then I remember the tears and faces of the young people at Mercy College during our family concerts years ago and the handshakes and kisses of those we've encountered in our travel over the years who have said that they came back to the church and the Lord because they had our music in their lives.
>
> For a long time we didn't fully understand the positive results of our crossover music until the letters and calls started coming in. People would say that they were on the dance floor, dancing to this or that song, but the lyrics kept lingering in their heads. They found themselves drawn to return to church afterward. Some were able to accept Christ, and turned their lives around. It takes all kinds of different music to reach the vast numbers of different kinds of people. I learned that at some point, when you believe God has called you to do something, forget about what people say. Seek God's favor first, and everything else will fall into place. (emphasis added)[91]

CeCe Winans and her peers saw their work as an evangelistic ministry to people who were not yet part of the church. Despite the criticism that she faced from churchgoers, she became confident that her music was helping to spread the good news of Christ and win new believers.

CeCe Winans identified the music she made with her brother as "inspirational" and "crossover music." She explicitly mentioned their unconventional musicality and referenced their song "Addictive Love." "Addictive Love" had only one line, sung only once, that overtly referenced Christ: "For me to live is Christ / to die, is gain." This lyric references the apostle Paul's words to the church at Philippi (Phil 1:21). The rest of the song lauded a love who had

[91] Ibid., 173–74.

become addictive—leaving room for the listener to discern the love's identity and relationship to the singers, and by extension relationship to the listener.

CeCe Winans saw the duo's platinum sales as a sign that their crossover music was an effective evangelizing tool. God was with them. Platinum sales trumped critical churchgoers' influence on the duo. Blackberry Records president and traditional gospel artist Doug Williams said:

> The most impacting change to help in the marketplace in gospel music has already happened. There are people now who are taking a closer look at gospel music than ever before. Gospel has been placed and heard in secular marketplaces as well as on the gospel radio and television. I credit artists such as Kirk Franklin, CeCe Winans, and different ones for breaking down those barriers, or to help break down those barriers that have held gospel back in a sense. Now people are listening to gospel that never listened.[92]

While CeCe Winans bemoaned criticism from churchgoing listeners, she and her brother clearly did not experience career-ending sanctions from ecclesial leaders in prominent churches. Jazz-gospel sextet Take 6 and gospel soprano Yolanda Adams followed the model of lyrical ambiguity all the way to the platinum charts.[93] Gospel artist Kirk Franklin's meteoric rise to popular fame via gospel music is detailed in a subsequent chapter.

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[92] Teresa E. Harris, "Top Ten Labels: New Moves for '99," *Gospel Industry Today*, December 1998, 12–13.

[93] The praise and worship movement also introduced a strong emphasis on lyrics written in the second person, but with the purpose of direct "vertical" communication with God and expression of *agape* (Godly love), rather than suggesting romantic or filial intentions.

Radicalization of Gospel Music in the Early days of Hip-Hop

Kirk Franklin codified the adoption of hip hop in gospel music when he burst on the scene with God's Property *and* hip hop veteran Salt from Salt-n-Pepa, singing "Stomp," in 1997. Surely, he and God's Property (also known as GP) were not the first to release a hip-hop gospel song. Like Thomas Dorsey, however, he, as the front man for God's Property, normalized hip-hop gospel, and is consequently considered a pioneer in urban contemporary gospel music.

At that time, gospel artists who veered from the norm were considered, or described themselves, as "radical." Kirk Franklin made the bold declaration at the beginning of his chart-topping remix of "Stomp:"

> For those of you that think gospel music has gone too far,
> You think we've gotten too radical with our message.
> Well I got news for you, you ain't heard nothin' yet,
> And if you don't know, now you know. Glory, Glory![94]

The "radical" hip-hop inflected musicality mixed with GP's oversized hip hop apparel in the music video set Kirk Franklin and God's Property apart.[95] By comparison, Fred Hammond recalls how revolutionary just wearing denim on the cover of his group Commissioned album proved to be.

> Commissioned helped change a mindset. How we dressed was an issue. We wore blue jeans… on an album cover, when nobody was. We lost record sales for that. That year, the Winans, Jessie Dixon, Richard Smallwood, Douglas Miller, and Al Green all had gospel records out with black tuxedos and cummerbunds, burgundy cummerbunds, basically. Turquois cumberbunds, but tuxedos. That was the gospel standard. And here we come out with these blue jeans looking like

[94] God's Property, Salt, and Kirk Franklin, *Stomp (Remix)*, MP3, 1997.

[95] "Stomp - Kirk Franklin," accessed March 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taeHa1qFo5s.

> "what?" But it was a different way of thinking and approaching it. That's the radical part--the thought life.[96]

Indeed, Commissioned released *I'm Going On* in 1985, with some of the group's members sporting denim. The same year, however, The Winans released *Let My People Go*, sporting blue (faux?-) leather suits on the album cover. Douglas Miller donned a black tuxedo with purple bowtie on the cover of *Unspeakable Joy* (1985). R&B-turned-gospel crooner Al Green sported a cream-colored suit with colorfully patterned shirt for *He Is the Light* (1985). It is clear, however, that one's Sunday best, and not denim, was the norm for gospel artists in the mid and late 1980s when Commissioned was a cutting edge contemporary gospel group that fused the latest R&B sounds into their gospel classics. A little over a decade later, Franklin was making waves God's property, with their crossover sound and fashion.

A Death, A Funeral, and a Lowered Goal

Kirk Franklin made a stunning if not prescient admission in his remarks at Andraé Crouch's funeral. He said:

> I was playing basketball with my little boy, and we were outside playing, you know, shooting some hoops, and I was kind of schooling him…. And, I was slam-dunking, and my son was like, "Daddy you cold! Daddy, you are good!" Now, before I impress you, let me let you know … what I did before the game started; I had lowered the goal. I was impressing my son, because I had lowered the goal. You know people don't listen to a lot of music anymore. A lot of people are not buying CDs anymore, and when I listen to all these songs today, I'm wondering, have we lowered the goal? If you don't know what the goal is, I'll just remind you what the goal is [beginning to list some of Andraé Crouch's compositions]:
>
> "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power;"
>
> "Soon and Very Soon;"
>
> "Jesus is the Answer;"

[96] Hammond, interview.

"Take Me Back;"
"Through It All;"
"Oh, It Is Jesus;" and
"We Are Not Ashamed."
Thank you, Andraé. Every songwriter here will be shooting till eternity, just to catch up.[97]

Not long after the funeral, Franklin clarified his analogy in a blog post:

> Our music doesn't affect people the way it used to. It doesn't create movements like it did during Andrae's [*sic*] time. Is it because today's worship leader is too busy trying to get the record deal, the applause, a higher church salary, and that crossover song? [The guilt is all over my hands, people!] [*sic*]
>
> Every step we take away from the cross — and the cross alone – every time we focus on sales over souls… the goal gets lower and lower.[98]

Kirk Franklin's remarks arguably mark the death of liturgical music in contemporary gospel. Before the rise of the platinum age, the term *gospel music* was synonymous with "church music" among black church musicians; it was not unusual for someone to declare that a song was a "church song," rather than a "gospel song." Franklin and many of his contemporaries represented a movement of gospel artists toward repertoires with limited liturgical music, or "church songs." In fact, some seventeen years after Kirk Franklin sang "Do you want a revolution?" on his hip-hop inflected album *Nu Nation Project*, many of his trendiest chart-toppers were either still relegated to worship services programmed for youth or not sung at all in black American churches.[99]

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[97] *Transcription of Crouch Celebration of Life Service.*

[98] Kirk Franklin, "Andrae Crouch: The Man Who Raised the Goal," *Kirk Franklin*, accessed September 8, 2016, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/kirkfranklin/2015/01/andrae-crouch-the-man-who-raised-the-goal/.

[99] *The Nu Nation Project* is one of my favorite Kirk Franklin albums, in which he displays a range of music, from traditional gospel tune "Something About the Name Jesus" to the danceable "Revolution," which includes a rap by pop producer Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. Franklin's relatively traditional "Why

In any case, at Crouch's funeral and on his later blog post, Franklin was admitting his collusion in an ethos that promoted marketing over ministry in the gospel music industry. More importantly, Franklin's spoken and blogged reflections brought attention to a definitive ending of something that Andraé Crouch represented. Crouch's funeral marked the death and burial of Christo-centric crossover gospel—crossover music that conspicuously evoked Christ as co-suffering savior. Instead gospel music now celebrated an "awesome God," (a phrase used in many contemporary gospel songs), and the God within (for example Mary Mary's "God in me"). The music was much more centered on self and victorious living through God, rather than overcoming with the help of Christ Jesus.

This move from Christo-centric crossover music to ambiguous lyrical development began well before Crouch's death, and Crouch was vocal about his disapproval. In an interview with *Rejoice!* magazine writer Edwin Smith, Crouch explained his concerns about gospel music's direction:

> [Edwin Smith:] You were quoted in another magazine a few years ago as being concerned about the absence of the name Jesus in much of today' s gospel music. Is that still important to you?
>
> [Andraé Crouch:] Very much so. In fact, I'm working on a song called *Let's Put His Name Back In Our Music*. You would think that with all our [gospel artists'] popularity right now this country would be ablaze for God. But it's not. To me, it seems more people (in gospel music) are concerned with their own promotion than sharing the Word. We've reached the mainstream but instead of fishing for men we're panning for gold.
>
> I don't mean to be critical or complain, but much of the music out now makes you want to boogie, but it doesn't make me want to cry or to lift my hands in

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We Sing" from his first national album *Kirk Franklin and The Family* (1993) found favor in black and white congregations and has been included in hymnals.

> praise to the Lord. That's why I really pray that God will use my music. God wants us to spread His Word, not our concept, because there' s no salvation in our concept. Without that anointed Word and real love of God that's concerned with our fellow man, people (outside of gospel) miss the point. Plus the world's not supposed to like us too much. If they like us too much. something's wrong.[100]

Crouch was not overly concerned with outward appearances of salvation, as evidenced in his song lyrics "You don't have to jump no pews, (and) run down no aisles / No chills run down your spine / But you'll know, that you've been born again," yet he could see that audiences were not moved to conviction or worship through contemporary gospel music.[101] while he did not "mean to be critical or complain," he offered a scathing critique of crossover gospel music in the early 1990s.

Nearly thirty years later, I likewise do not want to proffer contemporary gospel music history solely as a declension narrative. One should not grieve the end of Christo-centric gospel as one "who has no hope."[102] Acknowledgement of death prepares the way for resurrection.

Furthermore, just as the moon is both apart from and gravitationally tied to the earth, black gospel music has always been simultaneously tethered to and functioning outside of the black American church.[103] I suggest that an apogee has been reached, in which gospel has moved farther from its roots than ever before—further into a constellation of competing music forms

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[100] Edwin Smith, "Catching Up with Andrae Crouch," 8.

[101] "You Don't Have to Jump No Pews (I've Been Born Again) [Live] v1.1." Andrae Crouch & The Disciples, *Classic Gold: Live in London: Andrae Crouch & The Disciples*, LP (Light Records, 1978).

[102] Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13

[103] Of course, the black church is no monolith. "The black church" refers to the conglomeration of African American Protestant (especially evangelical) churches across the United States of America.

and diverse consumer markets. The orbit has been threatened with many artists leaving gospel to seek popular music contracts. Others have adjusted the music and message to win black popular or white Christian mainstream audiences. Yet, in all, the gospel orbit continues. Teetering on its axis of identity, it wobbles on. Another perigee is inevitable.

The next perigee could very well represent an entirely new subgenre of gospel music, just as the end of gospel's golden age prepared the way for contemporary gospel. In any case, gospel music still revolves around African American evangelicalism, and must always at some point turn and move back toward that center. This does leave a vital question to be addressed in the next chapter: how far has the black evangelical center moved?

Chapter 2
"You Sound Nice Baby, But Where Is the Oil?": Revised Pentecostal Theologies in the Platinum Age of Gospel

The preaching powerhouse Dr. Jacqueline "Jackie" E. McCullough stood assuredly in the pulpit of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. She was preaching at the "Holy Convocation" or annual gathering of Perfecting Fellowship International's constituent churches. This sisterhood of about twenty churches included congregations across America, as well as pastors from the UK and various Caribbean and African nations. The Fellowship was founded by the gospel music legend Bishop Marvin Winans, who gained fame in the early 1980s when he and his brothers were discovered by contemporary gospel pioneer Andraé Crouch. By the early 1990s, The Winans were one of the most acclaimed black gospel acts in the country. Bishop Winans went on to enjoy a solo career, and, after founding his church, recorded a number of choir albums.

Bishop Winans was not the only gospel star-turned-pastor in this crowd of hundreds. Among the most visible gospel celebrities were Paul Morton Sr., founder of the Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, Donnie McClurkin, who had helped Bishop Winans establish Perfecting Fellowship International (PFI), and Darrell Blair, a former member of gospel artist Kirk Franklin's group "The Family." Dr. McCullough herself had experienced international success as a gospel artist with her 1997 recording of the song "Stay Connected."

Dr. McCullough had a well-earned international reputation for being a no-nonsense, dynamic preacher-pastor based in Pomona, NY. She was considered an "old-school" preacher because of her penchant for sermonizing about living a pious or holy life, rather than expounding the prosperity gospel. As Dr. McCullough stepped into the pulpit, there was no question about her intention to preach unabashedly rather than participate in gospel entertainment. After giving introductory remarks and salutations, she called the congregation's attention to the Psalm text upon which she was basing her sermon. She attributed Psalm 108:1 to the ancient Israelite hero, David, before he had been named king. Prefacing the main idea of her sermon, she asked:

> Why was it necessary for David to go to Judah and come out of that country? Because, he had to be restored to his nationality. He was going to be king of Judah; he was going to be king of Israel. He had to go back and connect with his people and connect with his assignment.[104]

With the bold impertinence—sassiness really, of a veteran Sanctified church mother, enveloped in her signature raspy tone, Dr. McCullough continued to orate, as if speaking directly *to* David.[105]

> You have to come out the cave so you could [*sic*] be setup for your assignment. Not only that. You are surrounded with pagans and superstitious

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[104] *Perfecting Fellowship International Holy Convocation Sermon--Friday Night, May 22, 2015*, DVD (Arlington, Texas: Cornerstone Baptist Church, 2015).

[105] Cheryl Sanders defines the Sanctified church as: "an African American Christian reform movement that seeks to bring it standards of worship, personal morality, and social concern into conformity with the biblical hermeneutic of holiness and spiritual empowerment." Sanders explains that the Sanctified church is comprised of "saints," or church members who have taken on an "exilic consciousness, as manifested in the saints' awareness of alienation or separation from the dominant culture, based on racial differences and religious practices. This is in essence what it means to be "in the world, but not of it." The Sanctified church is more fully discussed later in this chapter. This dissertation follows Sanders's convention of capitalizing "Sanctified" but not "church" in the phrase *Sanctified church*. Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 5.

> people, David, and they have a way of contaminating you. And with your kind of assignment, you can't afford to be secular.[106]

With this rhetorical move from third- to second-person, McCullough made each person in this crowd of hundreds understand herself or himself to be David in that moment. As she directed her words to David, the congregation knew that she was really talking to each of them. Then, just as quickly, she pivoted from personal exhortation to corporate:

> That's what's wrong with the church today—we're being contaminated with secularism. I know you don't like that, but I'm going to say it one more time. We are influenced, impressed, fascinated, and taken over by the world. And all the world does is laugh at us, 'cause we are the ones who are supposed to influence and fascinate *them* (emphasis hers).[107]

Pastor McCullough made an astute and critical observation. She was communicating that things had changed in black Pentecostal churches; namely, that a secularized religiosity had become the norm.[108] Contemporary popular culture was strongly influencing church culture and doctrine, and had been for years. I am suggesting that this secularized religiosity among prominent churches, as Pastor McCullough highlighted, not only paralleled, but also aided the shifts in gospel culture and music since the 1990s. Gospel artists and the prominent church pastors who supported them, recalibrated piety. This chapter outlines the Pentecostal worship

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[106] *Perfecting Fellowship International Holy Convocation Sermon--Friday Night, May 22, 2015*.

[107] Ibid.

[108] The Concise Oxford Christian Dictionary defines secularism as "The term was coined *c.*1850 to denote a system which sought to order and interpret life on principles taken solely from this world, without recourse to belief in God and a future life. It is now used in a more general sense of the tendency to ignore, if not to deny, the principles of supernatural religion." E. A. Livingstone, ed., "Secularism," *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press, 2013), //www.oxfordreference.com/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-5228.

practices and underlying liturgical theologies that were adopted broadly in prominent black churches beginning in the 1980s. In general, the core of African American Pentecostal theologies of sanctification could be summarized as the belief that the way you live your life apart from the world (piety) positively correlates to the manifestation of God's power (anointing) at work in you when you do work (preach, sing, play an instrument, pray, etc.) for God. Ultimately, this chapter illumines the revised theologies of sanctification in prominent Pentecostal spaces that paved the way for platinum-age national artists to demonstrate a secularized piety without the risk of ruining their careers. All of these theological changes among pastors of prominent black evangelical churches aided the rise of the platinum age of gospel.

Demonstrating Piety

Every gospel artist is a performer in the traditional sense of the word.[109] The artist is not only making music, but the artist is also portraying piety. That is to say, the gospel artist is communicating: 1) that she is saved, or has accepted Jesus Christ as her savior from eternal damnation; *and* 2) that the artist is qualified to share the gospel through music because of his or her sanctification. Piety is the dutiful work of sanctification—the work of setting oneself apart for special employment by God.

Before the platinum age, a gospel artist's brand was only as good as the artist's ability to exude piety on and off stage. Artists demonstrate piety by evidently observing various

[109] Historically, gospel artists may have been reluctant to admit as much, because doing so might imply that the artist was focused on the music, the limelight, or the remuneration for singing, rather than the important evangelizing and disciplining work of singing gospel music.

prohibitions established by church leadership. Historically, these prohibitions would vary from church to church and denomination to denomination. But, Pentecostals, and especially those adhering to the Holiness tradition (including Church of God In Christ, as well as many Apostolic and Holiness churches), shared a set of strictures that a gospel artist was compelled to comply with for her career's sake. For example, a female gospel artist was unlikely to sing in pants, to conform to the prohibition against wearing men's clothing.[110] The words she used to exhort the listener and introduce songs communicated a mature relationship with Christ. The gospel artist's offstage portrayal of piety was of paramount importance. The artist's entire lifestyle communicated the type of relationship that the artist had with Christ.[111] To act impiously was often met with the critique that the artist was "not saved."

As previously mentioned, to be saved is to accept Jesus Christ as one's savior from the consequences of sin, especially eternal hell.[112] This was only the first step to building a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For Pentecostals, to be assuredly saved, one also had to be sanctified. The evidence of salvation was sanctification, or sacralization of oneself through the

[110] Some Pentecostals considered pants/trousers/slacks to be strictly men's clothing, and therefore it was sinful for a woman to wear such. This prohibition was based on Deuteronomy 22:5, "A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the Lord your God." All biblical quotations in this chapter use the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation, unless specified otherwise.

[111] This display of piety was most important, and it was synonymous with demonstration of salvation.

[112] John 3:16 is often used as the reference for conceptions of salvation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

discipline of setting oneself apart from behaviors and mindsets that were either sinful or worldly.[113] In this case, one's salvation was always in question.

The metrics of piety have shifted in the platinum age of gospel (1993-2013), allowing gospel artists to engage in activities that would have previously been considered worldly or sinful—activities which would have killed their brands and careers. In the past, gospel artists were expected to limit their engagements to churches and para-ecclesial events, such as gospel workshop concerts, civic engagements, and a limited range of secular spaces. Now, gospel artists can and do compete with secular artists on the secular artists' turf—from club stages and concert halls, to silver and small screens—for mainstream market share. For example, gospel duo Mary Mary sang on the 2012 Essence Festival main stage—a coveted platform typically reserved for highly celebrated black popular music artists. As late as the early 1980s, however, Dr. Mattie Moss Clark, Andraé Crouch, and other gospel artists, were still judged by the old rules.

The Clarks, the Grammys, and the Old Metrics

The old metrics of piety were still at play on the national level in the COGIC denomination when its music department president, Mattie Moss Clark, appeared on the 1983 Grammy Awards. Dr. Mattie Moss Clark (1925-1994) was a living legend among black gospel music enthusiasts.[114] She was credited with forever changing black gospel choir music by

[113] A behavior, activity, mindset, or object can be worldly without being sinful. In this case, worldliness is that which is ordinary, opposed to that which is conspicuously spiritual. For example, a song that speaks of romantic love without profanity or vulgarity could be worldly, without being sinful.

[114] Even though her maiden and married names were not hyphenated, she was known and referred to by all 3 (first, maiden, married) names: Dr. Mattie Moss Clark.

normalizing three-part harmony (soprano/alto/tenor) and codifying gospel heterophony across voice parts.[115] Her stunning success as a choir director and recording artist rendered her tenure as president of the Church of God In Christ's music department (1968-1994) the most celebrated in the department's history. As president, she had influenced the careers of scores of gospel artists including BeBe Winans, Commissioned, Vanessa Bell Armstong, and Rance Allen.[116] But all of that was only part of what made her a legend. Beyond all of the aforementioned accomplishments, she had literally birthed and groomed one of the most successful gospel groups of the early 1980s, The Clark Sisters, a group consisting of her daughters, Jacqueline "Jacky," Denise, Elbernita "Twinkie," Dorinda, and Karen.[117]

While Dr. Clark had an amazing career as a gospel artist, her reach to mainstream audiences was limited by the enforcement of doctrines of holiness in the Church of God In Christ. When the Clark Sisters were nominated and invited to sing at the 1983 Grammy Awards, it made sense that Dr. Clark would join them for this monumental appearance since she had always been a guiding hand for the group up to that point. At the Grammys, the fast-paced introduction to their song rang from the sound system as Dr. Clark and her daughters ran down the aisle from the back of the arena in full-length, black, fishtail gowns adorned with plumes of black faux-feathers. As they ascended the steps to the stage, they began to belt out a lively

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[115] gospel heterophony across voice parts signifies that in at least one part of a song, all three voice parts (or sections) would *simultaneously* sing their own distinct melodic lines and lyrics.

[116] Eugene B. McCoy, *Climbing Up the Mountain: The Life and Times of a Musical Legend* (Nashville, Tennessee: Sparrow Press, 1994), 100–105.

[117] Denise later left the group. Twinkie had a stint as a solo artist away from the group, but subsequently returned. "The Clark Sisters," *Unsung*, December 1, 2008.

rendition of their high-energy tune "Hallelujah." This was a high moment for Dr. Clark. She was singing gospel music with her talented daughters before an auditorium filled with some of the biggest artists in American popular music, as well as a television audience of millions.

Yet, not long after reaching this pinnacle, she found herself in the valley of rebuke. She returned from the Grammys to meet strong sanction from COGIC leadership for appearing on the secular awards show.[118] It was great to take the gospel to the world, but only by sanctified means. The Grammy Awards stage was too worldly, or not holy enough, for the president of the COGIC music department.

Bishop Marvin Winans stated it this way: "With the breakout of 'You Brought the Sunshine,' they [The Clark Sisters] found themselves in a very unenviable position, because they had to choose [between the two following options]: do I follow where this path is leading me—[to] probably become more famous, [and to] sell more albums—or do I allow my denomination to hold me back?"[119] The Clarks were gospel artists who had the national stage of the Church of God In Christ as their home base. They were essentially guaranteed time in the spotlight at all the major national COGIC conventions. Yet, following the rules of piety enforced by the denomination's leadership meant limited investment in mainstream markets.

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[118] Ibid.

[119] The Clark Sisters' album *You Brought the Sunshine* was released in 1981. The title track garnered so much attention on mainstream radio that gospel radio stations were forced to play the song even though it had previously been considered too much like secular music. In fact, "Twinkie" Clark drew creatively from Stevie Wonder's "Master Blaster" to create the signature instrumental riffs in "You Brought the Sunshine." Ibid.; "Unsung The Clark Sisters Part 4 of 7 -- Youtube," 2009, accessed March 10, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTfT5DEtThY.

Contemporary Gospel pioneer Andraé Crouch faced similar sanctions. Crouch did not shy away from interaction with contemporary popular culture. In fact, according to Ebony magazine contributor Walter Rice Burrell, inflections of the latest funk, as well as "disco, progressive jazz, rhythm and blues, pop and even rock and disco music," is what made Crouch's style of contemporary gospel unique.[120] Like many gospel artists before him, he was committed to taking the gospel sound to the world, and he did not participate in the alienation from society that his COGIC upbringing had encouraged. In a 1982 *Ebony* magazine article, Crouch gave an account of his workings in the world.

> "Sometimes the church wants you to stay home," he explains. "But the Bible says for us to 'go into the world and preach the gospel.' So what do all those good church people think that means? To keep pouring water into the ocean? The ocean already has plenty of water. We need to pour some of that precious water onto some dry spots."[121]

Most likely, Crouch was referencing "The Great Commission," Christ's charge to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead, as detailed in the Gospel of Matthew:

> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
>
> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.
>
> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
>
> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

[120] Burrell, "The Gospel According to Andrae Crouch," 60.

[121] Ibid.

> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (emphasis added. Mt 28:16-20, NRSV)

As a member of COGIC, Crouch would certainly consider this mandate to be applicable to all Christians. Crouch also could have been referencing Christ's imperative as recorded in Matthew 24:14 (NRSV): "And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come." In either case, Crouch prioritized spreading the gospel over adhering to the Pentecostal churches' doctrine of separation between church and contemporary culture. He was anomalous in his time, and he suffered some alienation in his denomination because of his musical career choices.

Prominent Churches and Platforms

Dr. Clark's death in 1994 occurred at the cusp of the platinum age of gospel. By 1994, many leaders in *prominent* Pentecostal pulpits and denominations had long since begun recalibrating their metrics of piety. This recalibration of piety allowed gospel artists, including Dr. Clark's own daughters, to engage in activities and take their music and message to places that Dr. Clark had been forbidden to go. The recalibration of piety provided a justification for the profound secularization of gospel music composition and performance that was just beginning.

It is important to distinguish prominent megachurches as the vanguard of this movement to assimilate to contemporary culture, because their size and influence provide a circuit of large gospel venues where gospel artists can sing, build a fan base, and sell merchandise. Only a fraction of the some 149 predominately black megachurches in the USA, are *prominent*. Prominent megachurches share the following characteristics: 1) as megachurches, they welcome

two thousand or more attendees each week; 2) they make significant investment in their respective churches' music programming and 3) they have high visibility through television broadcasting, online streaming, or through the pastor's own celebrity (Table 2.1).[122] Consequently these prominent churches were and continue to be coveted venues for national gospel artists.

Table 2.1 Prominent Black Megachurches Frequented by National Gospel Artists in the Platinum Age

Prominent Megachurch	City	State	Pastor during height of Church's Prominence	Notes
The Worship Center Christian Church	Birmingham	AL	Van Moody	
Northview Christian Church	Montgomery	AL	Hart Ramsey	
City of Refuge	Gardena (Los Angeles area)	CA	Noel Jones	
Faithful Central Bible Church	Inglewood (Los Angeles area)	CA	Kenneth C. Ulmer	
West Angeles COGIC	Los Angeles	CA	Charles Blake	*
The Potter's House	Denver	CO	Chris Hill	*
Cathedral of the Holy Spirit	Bridgeport	CT	Kenneth Moales Jr.	
Bethel Baptist Institutional Church	Jacksonville	FL	Rudolph McKissick Jr.	*
New Birth Missionary Baptist Church	Atlanta	GA	Eddie Long	
Greater Travelers Rest / The House of Hope Atlanta	Decatur (Atlanta area)	GA	E. Dewey Smith	
Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church	Chicago	IL	Charles Jenkins, Clay Evans	*
New Life Covenant Church	Chicago	IL	John Hannah	
Canaan Christian Church	Louisville	KY	Walter Malone Jr.	
Greater St. Stephen Full Gospel Baptist Church	New Orleans	LA	Paul Morton	+

[122] Since megachurches have normalized a type of corporatized ministry operation that all prominent churches tend to employ, and since the vast majority of prominent churches are megachurches, the term *megachurches* is used to denote *prominent churches* unless otherwise specified. The list of prominent megachurches, compiled with the help of gospel musician and minister James Anthony Plenty, is not exhaustive. James Anthony Plenty, interview by Charrise Barron, Telephone, November 7, 2015.

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Prominent Megachurch	City	State	Pastor during height of Church's Prominence	Notes
Bethel A.M.E. Church	Baltimore	MA	Frank M. Reid III	
Metropolitan Baptist Church	Largo (Washington D.C. area)	MD	H. Beecher Hicks (until April 2015)	
First Baptist Church of Glenarden	Upper Marlboro (Washington D.C. area)	MD	John K. Jenkins Sr.	
Greater Emmanuel Institutional COGIC	Detroit	MI	J. Drew Sheard	
The Perfecting Church	Detroit	MI	Marvin Winans	+*
Friendship Missionary Baptist Church	Charlotte	NC	Clifford Jones	
Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral.	Jamaica, Queens	NY	Floyd Flake	*
Higher Dimensions	Tulsa	OK	Carlton Pearson	+
Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church	Memphis	TN	Frank A. Thomas (1992-2012)	
Mt. Zion Full Gospel Baptist Church	Nashville	TN	Joseph W. Walker III	
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship	Dallas	TX	Tony Evans	
The Potter's House	Dallas	TX	T.D. Jakes	#+*
The Fountain of Praise	Houston	TX	Remus Wright	#
Windsor Village United Methodist Church	Houston	TX	Kirbyjon Caldwell	#*

The church's worship leader or minister of music was/is a National Recording Artist.
+ The church's pastor was/is a National Recording Artist.
* The church has a national recording choir (with at least one song reaching national gospel charts).

Prominent platforms included stages at large denominational conventions, gospel music conventions, and national television shows (Table 2.2).[123] Prominent platforms such as Holy Convocation of the Church of God In Christ, and the Gospel Music Workshop of America, provide exposure to thousands of churchgoers and/or gospel music enthusiasts. Local church leaders from around the country discover and invite artists from these conventions to their respective churches, thereby encouraging their local congregants to support the same artists.

[123] This list includes the more famous prominent platforms; no claim is made that this list is exhaustive.

Table 2.2 Prominent Platforms for Black Gospel Artists during Platinum Age

Prominent Platform	Host During Height of Influence
Azusa Conference	Carlton Pearson
Bobby Jones Gospel on *BET* Cable Network	Bobby Jones
Church of God In Christ Holy Convocation	G.L. Patterson; Charles Blake
Church of God In Christ Midnight Musicals	G.L. Patterson; Charles Blake
Church of God In Christ Auxiliaries in Ministry (AIM) Convention	G.L. Patterson; Charles Blake
Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA)	James Cleveland
Megafest and sub-conferences including Woman Thou Art Loosed	T.D. Jakes
National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses (NCGCC)	Kenneth Moales Sr.
Sunday Best on *BET* Cable Network (premiered 2007)	Kirk Franklin

The black megachurch, as a concert venue and producer of gospel music, has become a significant part of the gospel music industry. Industry executive Monica Coates states that the local church is one of three main sectors of the gospel music industry. [124] A gospel artist may hold a concert at the church, or sing during the Sunday morning worship service after a weekend concert at some other location in the same city or region. Gospel artists know that they are welcome and celebrated at prominent churches; they also have an expectation to receive an honorarium for singing in these churches' worship services. In the same vein, concert promoters rely upon these churches to serve as ticketed concert venues.

Prominent churches tend to share a ministry model that puts great emphasis on "excellence," particularly among the worship and fine arts staff (which tends to include music, dance, and theater arts). The church is run as a corporation with full-time employees. Musicians

[124] Coates, *The Beginner's Guide to the Gospel Music Industry: A Handbook for Aspiring Artists and Industry Executives*, 13, 27–36.

are usually paid to play for prime services, and some of the regular singers may be paid. Additionally, worship services are designed with great attention to broadcasting and/or live-streaming constraints. Constraints may include length of service, and various restraints from articulating certain doctrines.

Black televangelism has also grown significantly during the last thirty years. In fact, there is now an expectation that a black megachurch will participate in televangelism, and at the very least live-stream its services. Consequently, megachurches have become the face of "the black church," even though most American churches, regardless of race or denomination, are, comprised of 100 members or less.[125] Given the command of the black megachurches' voice in the public sphere and public imagination, it may be surprising that only around 149 black megachurches have developed in the United States since 1980.[126] Television broadcasting and live-streaming services have amplified the collective voice of the megachurches. This is why their recalibration of piety is so important. Their heightened visibility across the country, and in some cases around the world, has the potential to influence multitudes. Therefore, if a gospel artist can garner support of a prominent church pastor, that will far outweigh any financial or career repercussions of being shunned by pastors from average-sized churches.

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[125] "Fast Facts about American Religion," accessed November 1, 2015, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#numcong.

[126] Tucker Worgs states, "Since 1980 at least 149 black megachurches have developed across the United States." Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs, *The Black Megachurch: Theology, Gender, and the Politics of Public Engagement* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 6.

Changing Black Religious Landscape from the late 1980s

Bishop-Elect Marvin Winans, the founder and convener of PFI, grew up in the Church of God In Christ denomination before branching out and founding Perfecting Church in his hometown of Detroit, Michigan. The church began in his basement in 1989, and by 1994, the congregation had outgrown its facility. Today Perfecting Church boasts a membership of 4,500.[127]

PFI and its flagship Perfecting Church represent a trend in black American churches that preceded if not precipitated—at least in part—the platinum age of gospel music. Among African Americans, megachurches and non-denominationalism boomed during the 1980s-1990s. As previously mentioned, by 2011, there were at least 149 predominantly African American megachurches in the United States, most of which had become megachurches in the 1980s.[128] Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs states:

> Just like the storefront church met the needs of the southern migrants that the established mainline black churches in the North were not meeting, black megachurch growth is driven by the new migrants' demands for a religious experience that is accessible, enthusiastic, professional, and relevant to the here and now.[129]

Tucker-Worgs ties the remarkable growth of megachurches to what Andrew Wiese calls the "next great migration" or the movement of African Americans from urban areas to the

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[127] "Perfecting Church," accessed May 29, 2015, http://www.perfectingchurch.org/mcms/perfect/content.cfm?pulldata=scmscontent.cfm&Content_Id=4648.

[128] Tucker-Worgs, *The Black Megachurch*, 6.

[129] Ibid., 47.

suburbs during the1980s and 1990s.[130] Cheryl Townsend Gilkes rightly suggests, however, that the creation of megachurches had less to do with movement to suburbs as it had to do with the growing numbers of educated black professionals who were gravitating toward a more professional presentation of ministry at the local church, along with more educated, professional, and polished clergy.[131] This was a class migration, rather than a geographic migration.

Aside from this class migration that Tucker-Worgs and Gilkes illuminate, there was also a theological migration taking place. A number of pastors who experienced their own spiritual formation in Pentecostal churches began to found non-denominational churches. These new churches subscribed to most of the liturgical practices of the traditional Pentecostal churches they had separated from, but non-denominational theologies of sanctification allowed for a much more lenient definition of piety. Jonathan Walton describes these non-denominational pastors as *neo-Pentecostal*:

> The term *neo-Pentecostal* describes contemporary ministries that originated from one of the recognized classical Pentecostal movements. Insofar as televangelists' ecclesial affiliation can be traced back to a Pentecostal fellowship or denomination such as the Church of God In Christ, they are Pentecostal. But they are neo-Pentecostal if their ecclesial practices unashamedly integrate traditional Pentecostal beliefs with the cultural characteristics of the contemporary moment. … Neo-Pentecostals… are "in the world but not of it, unless it is in the name of Jesus."[132]

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[130] Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Tucker-Worgs, *The Black Megachurch*.

[131] Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "Plenty Good Room: Adaptation in a Changing Black Church," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 558 (1998): 103.

[132] Quotation marks are that of Walton. Walton, *Watch This!*, 79.

The expression "in the world but not of it" was a typical phrase used among people in traditional Pentecostal denominations to explain a Pentecostal practitioner's relationship with current culture. Yet, Walton illuminates the neo-Pentecostal's fluency in the affairs of "the world." Activities were "worldly" if they were common in current culture but also considered among Pentecostals to be spiritually harmful, i.e. encouraging sinful activity or not conducive to pious living. Activities such as listening to secular music and watching movies would certainly fall under the "worldly" rubric in traditional Pentecostalism. This chapter employs the term *Pentecostal* for these non-denominational pastors and artists, because they would have described themselves as Pentecostal or non-denominational, rather than *neo-Pentecostal*.[133] They saw themselves not as abandoners of Pentecostal tradition, but as having a better understanding of the Bible than their predecessors. Fred Hammond, a national gospel artist and licensed minister explained:

> A lot of the Apostolic churches have not been… as popular, and people are leaving—going to non-denominational. I think Church of God In Christ is still kind of holding their own a little bit. But, a lot of just non-denominational organizational type churches are just springing up all over the country, where it's really just about "what does the Word [the Bible] say?" and "we're not going to link up with going to a convention this year. We'll have a conference here at the church, or we'll go to this and we'll support this person or that person."
>
> A lot of people are reading the Bible a little bit different. Because once you start to explain—once the Greek and Hebrew started getting introduced into the Word, and people started realizing you have to go back to the original text, they started seeing different meanings. Like, "Oh, I always thought it was this." Or, "I

[133] While most prominent non-denominational churches do embrace the charismata or gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, not all non-denominational church pastors have come from Pentecostal churches or denominations. I refer to non-denominational artists and pastors who *have* come from Pentecostal traditions as Pentecostal.

always thought it was this." "So, you mean women wearing pants has nothing to do with being saved at all. Wow! Really?"[134]

A prime example of a church that likely would have been considered "non-denominational" was The Potter's House, pastored by Bishop T.D. Jakes, who himself held the second highest leadership position, Vice-Prelate, in an Apostolic denomination.[135] While I regularly observed worship services between August 2014 and July 2015, the church did not advertise itself as affiliated with Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies, Inc. in any way to church visitors, during its broadcasts, or on its website.

Like Jakes, many pastors named or renamed their churches to show a break from traditional denominational thinking, and to disassociate from any negative stereotypes about a certain denomination that might hinder someone from visiting the church. Even Bishop Winans's church did not include a traditional denominational moniker, yet he boldly declared that his church was Pentecostal, based largely on the traditional black Pentecostalism that he had learned in COGIC. He explicitly stated his Pentecostal allegiances in a phone interview:

> Charrise Barron (CB): Tell me, how would you describe Perfecting Church in terms of denomination, or Pentecostal, or sanctified, or….
>
> Marvin Winans (MW): We're all Pentecostal. … We would come out of the Church of God In Christ.[136]

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[134] Hammond, interview.

[135] Bishop Jakes is listed as a national official of the Apostolic denomination Higher Ground Always Abounding Assemblies, Inc. "National Organization Officials | Higher Ground AAA," accessed May 25, 2015, http://www.highergroundaaa.com/national-officials.

[136] Winans, interview.

In 2015, two decades after Winans established Perfecting Church, and years after the Perfecting Fellowship International first gathered churches from across the country and world, the "Perfecting" brand was synonymous with Pentecostalism and Pastor Winans's musicianship.[137]

While Bishop Winans was a gospel artist, pastor, and founder of a Pentecostal fellowship of churches, Bishop Paul S. Morton Sr. was a gospel artist, pastor, and founder of a denomination that merges Baptist and Pentecostal theologies. Bishop Morton was born in Canada where his father was pastoring a COGIC church. Paul S. Morton Sr. was part of the COGIC denomination until he accepted the pastorate at Greater St. Stephen Baptist church in New Orleans, LA. By the time Morton launched the Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, his local church had over 10,000 members.[138] Morton founded his own fellowship of churches that explicitly and intentionally merged Baptist tenets of salvation with Pentecostal tenets related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Kenneth Dupree's 1993 *Score* article quoted Kenneth Ulmer, one of the founding pastors of the Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, to explain the mixing of Baptist and Pentecostal doctrines:[139]

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[137] In fact, in 1999, national gospel artist Donnie McClurkin left his position as assistant pastor of Perfecting Church in Detroit, to found and pastor Perfecting Faith Church in Freeport, NY, also part of PFI. "Perfecting Faith Church: Ministry Means People-Pastor Donnie McClurkin," accessed November 9, 2015, http://perfectingfaith.com/#!churchhistory/c1j1a.

[138] Kenneth H. Dupree, "Baptist Bishop Paul Morton Launching A New Organization," *Score*, August 1993, 36.

[139] Ulmer and Eddie Long were two very prominent pastors who helped to found Morton's fellowship of charismatic Baptists. When the organization was created, Morton eschewed the word *denomination* as a descriptor for the sisterhood of churches he was establishing. He said, "It's not a new convention or denomination. People are tired of the same old thing. People want to get involved with a convention that is doing something, making a real difference. We offer a new structure being built on an old foundation."

> [Kenneth Ulmer said,] "Up to now, they have been told that this is not 'Baptist' or 'orthodox'." An alternative is now being fostered among Baptists where the free flow of the [Holy] Spirit can dominate, where His [God's] ways can be taught, His [God's] gifts shared and jubilant celebration enjoyed.[140]

Bishop Morton went on to say:

> We have a well balanced ministry.[*sic*] We borrow from the positive thinkers, the organization of the Baptist, the importance of teaching the word from the Word Church, the jubilation of the Pentecostal and deliverance from the charismatics and we incorporate these attributes into one church.[141]

Ulmer and Morton lauded the quintessential (if not stereotypical) elements of black Pentecostal worship, namely "jubilation," "free flow of the Spirit," and exercising gifts of the Holy Spirit.[142] Sanctified worship was synonymous with boisterous singing and dancing, and operation of Spirit gifts. Ulmer, Morton, and T.D. Jakes with his satellite Potter's House churches in Denver, Fort Worth, and North Dallas, represented scores of prominent pastors who since the late 1980s and early 1990s were elevating Pentecostal liturgical theologies and concomitant worship practices while jettisoning the traditional Pentecostal theologies of sanctification.[143]

(The language Bishop Morton used is similar to the words later used by PFI leadership to articulate that PFI is not a denomination.) Ibid., 37.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Explanation of black Pentecostal worship practices and liturgical theologies appears later in this chapter.

[143] Tucker-Worg notes: "Black megachurches also have an enthusiastic worship style that attracts members. The choirs and the style of preaching are more like those of the Sanctified churches and the storefronts than the 'silk-stocking' churches of the old black middle class that alienated the southern migrants." Tucker-Worgs, *The Black Megachurch*, 48.

While Tucker-Worgs relates social activism among black megachurches to denomination, little attention has been given to theological shifts regarding sanctification and liturgy among megachurches, with the exception of Birgitta Johnson discussing liturgical shifts at Kenneth Ulmer's Faith Central Baptist Church

Incidentally, the number of gospel artists who became pastors, and vice-versa, is significant and worthy of more study. Several prominent pastors were also known as solo gospel artists, including Bishop Morton, Bishop Winans, and Bishop T.D. Jakes. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, to identify causal relationships between music ministry or gospel career and pastoring. It is not surprising, however that many of the prominent churches were pastored by gospel artists. That arrangement further supported the ability of gospel artists in the platinum age to shift piety metrics away from the old, traditional sanctions that limited gospel artists' interaction with mainstream audiences. Since the early 1990s, many artists had become pastors; they made the ecclesial rules and fashioned their churches into gospel music venues for themselves and their music industry peers. In any case, Bishop Winans and Bishop Morton illustrate the trend of prominent church leaders forming new fellowships of churches that pull largely from traditional Pentecostal doctrine while allowing gospel artists to have greater range of secularized expression in music ministry. That wider range of expression usually veered into territory that would have been clearly marked "worldly" before the rise of the platinum age.

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in her dissertation and a recently published article. Consequently, my own work seeks to show the connection between the gospel music industry and the shifts in liturgical and sanctification theologies among prominent megachurches and denominational platforms. Birgitta Joelisa Johnson, "'Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing': Music and Worship in African American Megachurches of Los Angeles, California" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008); Birgitta Joelisa Johnson, "'This Is Not the Warm-Up Act!': How Praise and Worship Reflects Expanding Musical Traditions and Theology in a Bapticostal Charismatic African American Megachurch," in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique Marie Ingalls and Amos Yong (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 117–32; Tucker-Worgs, *The Black Megachurch*, 6.

Pentecostal Liturgical Practices and Theologies Normalized in Prominent Churches

Pentecostalism had not only affected corporate worship in black megachurches, but also tremendously influenced gospel music. In fact, many of the most commercially successful platinum-age national gospel artists were affiliated with or had grown up attending Pentecostal, Holiness, or Apostolic churches (Table 2.3 and Table 2.4).[144] Bishop Charles Mason was an early joiner to the American Pentecostal movement when he founded the COGIC denomination around the turn of the twentieth century; COGIC has since grown to be one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in the United States.[145] For generations, COGIC had been the home and training ground of some of the greatest stars in gospel, including Andraé Crouch, Kim Burrell, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, the Hawkins, the Clark Sisters and their mother Mattie Moss Clark, Kierra Sheard, and The Winans family—including Bishop Marvin Winans, his parents Mom & Pop Winans, and several of his nine siblings. Consequently, COGIC was as a paragon of both Pentecostal corporate worship and gospel music-making.[146]

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[144] Some of the Table 2.4 information gathered from James B. Boyer, "Gospel Music in the COGIC Tradition," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Fall 1989, 17.

[145] In Zora Neale Hurston's description of worship that typifies "The Sanctified Church," Hurston indubitably marks COGIC as a constitutive part of "The Sanctified Church." Moreover, she posits that there are two branches of the Sanctified church, of which COGIC is one. In practice, however, black Pentecostals who were born during or before the height of the Civil Rights Movement would likely use "Sanctified" interchangeably with "Pentecostal," and therefore Sanctified churches would be constitutive of many more branches than just Church of God in Christ and Saints of God in Christ, as Hurston asserts. Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1981), 103; "The Founder & Church History | Church Of God In Christ," accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.cogic.org/our-foundation/the-founder-church-history/.

[146] Most of the artists profiled in this dissertation have had significant spiritual formation in COGIC. This dissertation is not, however, a study of revisionist theology among only COGIC churches.

Table 2.3 Platinum-Certified Gospel Artists and Their Respective Childhood or Claimed Denominational Affiliations

Platinum-Certified Gospel Artist	Affiliation Of Major Spiritual Formation	First Platinum-Certified Title
Bebe & Cece Winans	COGIC Pentecostal	*Different Lifestyles*
Cece Winans	COGIC Pentecostal	*Alone In His Presence*
Donnie Mcclurkin	Pentecostal	*Live In London & More*
Fred Hammond	Apostolic	*Pages Of Life Chapters I And II*
Juanita Bynum	Pentecostal	*A Piece Of My Passion*
Kirk Franklin	Baptist, Then Charismatic	*Kirk Franklin & The Family*
Marvin Sapp	Pentecostal	"Never Would Have Made It" (Ringtone)
Mary Mary	COGIC Pentecostal	*Thankful*
Shekinah Glory Ministry	Pentecostal	*Shekinah Glory Ministry Live* (Video)
Soundtrack	N/A	*The Prince Of Egypt*
Take 6	Seventh-Day Adventist[147]	*Take 6*
Various	N/A	*Wow Gospel 1998*
Various	N/A	*Wow Gospel 2000*
Yolanda Adams	Baptist	*Mountain High...Valley Low*

Table 2.4 Other Major National Gospel Artists and Their Respective Childhood or Claimed Denominational Affiliations

Other National Gospel Artists	Affiliation or Major Spiritual Formation	Gold-Certified Gospel Artist
Andraé Crouch	COGIC Pentecostal	
Asaph Ward	COGIC Pentecostal	
Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir	Pentecostal/Charismatic	*
Deitrick Haddon	Pentecostal	
Donald Lawrence	Pentecostal/Charismatic	*

[147] Richard N. Ostling, "Evangelism and All That Jazz Take 6 Puts Seventh-Day Adventism on the Charts," *Time*, March 20, 1989, 6.

Section 2.4 (Continued)

Other National Gospel Artists	Affiliation or Major Spiritual Formation	Gold-Certified Gospel Artist
Edwin Hawkins	Pentecostal	*
Grits	(Unknown)	*
Hawkins Family	COGIC Pentecostal	
Hezekiah Walker	Pentecostal	
Israel Houghton	Pentecostal/Charismatic	*
John P. Kee	(Unknown)	*
Kierra Sheard	COGIC Pentecostal	
Kim Burell	COGIC Pentecostal	
Kurt Carr	Pentecostal	*
Mattie Moss Clark	COGIC Pentecostal	
Myrna Summers	COGIC Pentecostal	
Rance Allen	COGIC Pentecostal	
Richard White	COGIC Pentecostal	
Shirley Caesar	Holiness	*
Smokie Norful	Methodist	*
Sounds of Blackness	(Unknown)	*
T.D. Jakes	Apostolic/Pentecostal	
Tamela Mann	COGIC Pentecostal	*
Tasha Cobbs	Pentecostal	
The Clark Sisters	COGIC Pentecostal	
The Winans	COGIC Pentecostal	*
Timothy Wright	COGIC Pentecostal	
Trin-i-tee 5:7	(Unknown)	*
Tye Tribbett	Pentecostal	
Vanessa Bell Armstrong	COGIC Pentecostal	

Historically, the terms “Pentecostal” and “Sanctified” have often been used interchangeably to describe black churches that have ecstatic worship practices. While the Holiness, Apostolic, and Pentecostal fellowships have been classified distinctly from one another among scholars, the terms “Pentecostal” and “Sanctified” have often been used interchangeably

as a "broader category" to identify any one of the Holiness, Apostolic, and Pentecostal traditions.[148] This dissertation conforms to this practice.

The history of the Sanctified church is provided in Sanders's *Saints in Exile*. Historians of African American Christianity typically trace the emergence of African American Pentecostalism to the Azusa Street Revival led by William J. Seymour in the early 1900s. Prior to that, most African American churchgoers were Baptist or Methodist. (The Holiness tradition is a type of Methodism that predates the Pentecostal movement.) After Baptist and Methodist preachers and pastors began to visit and be affected by the Azusa Street Revival, they began to found Pentecostal churches, which taught that the gift of *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues, was a requisite for salvation. Many Holiness churches also began to adopt the belief that the gift of speaking in tongues was a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Apostolic churches—churches that both celebrate glossolalia and baptize in the name of Jesus rather than the Trinitarian formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—also began to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century. Sanders points out that the common tenet among Holiness, Pentecostal, and Apostolic traditions was the ethic of sanctification, or separation of self from contemporary culture.

The unifying characteristics among Pentecostals (and Charismatics) had to do with both public worship, or liturgy, and sanctification.[149] Often, scholars discussing liturgy and liturgical

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[148] Scott Billingsley, *It's a New Day: Race and Gender in the Modern Charismatic Movement*, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 15–16.

[149] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen suggests that globally, Pentecostalism can be divided into three main categories: 1) Pentecostal denominations; 2) Pentecostal or charismatic movements within established churches, such as the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal; and 3) neo-charismatic movements, or independent Pentecostal movements, such as the Vineyard Church. Anderson states that Walter Hollenweger codified the tripartite taxonomy of Pentecostalism. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Introduction: Pentecostalism and Pentecostal Theology in the Third Millennium: Taking Stock of the

music tend to focus on Protestant traditions, with very little attention given to African American evangelical liturgical practices.[150] Yet, liturgy, or the public worship of the people, has always been an integral part of African American religious expression. Furthermore, music had a place of primacy in African American Protestantism from the beginning.

Corporate worship among Pentecostals typically included congregational participation, some amount of spontaneity, expectation of "miraculous intervention," or manifestation of gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledgement of the immediacy of God's presence.[151] Since the 1980s, black megachurches outside of the Pentecostal tradition adopted certain practices that had historically typified worship among black Pentecostals.

By the 2000s, Sunday morning worship at a majority of prominent megachurches included:

> **Invocation / Prayer:**
> One person leads a corporate prayer. Everyone in the congregation is expected and encouraged to pray simultaneously with the prayer leader.
>
> **Praise and Worship:**
> A time of congregational singing led by a small group of singers with the intent to usher in the presence of God.

Contemporary Global Situation," in *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts*, ed. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2009), xv–xvi. According to Allan Anderson, any church that emphasizes gifts of the Holy Spirit is Pentecostal, which would include Charismatic churches. Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 5.

[150] An exception to this rule is Melva Costen's work. Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007); Melva Wilson Costen, *In Spirit and in Truth: The Music of African American Worship*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

[151] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 4.

Additional Programming:
This may include announcements special prayers, scripture reading, communion, and other music and fine arts demonstrations, such as choral singing, dramatic work, or dance.

Sermon:
The pastor or some other designee preaches.

Offering:
Monetary donations are collected from congregants.

Altar Call / Invitation:
Congregants are invited to give their hearts to God and/or join the local church.

The Lord's Supper (also known as Communion, Holy Communion, or Eucharist)
Consuming bread or cracker and wine or grape juice to symbolize consumption of the blood and body of Christ. Typically occurs only once per month.[152]

Benediction:
The worship service is adjourned, usually with a final word of blessing and/or exhortation.

While the order of activities could change, and other practices such as responsive reading may have also been part of the order of service, the aforementioned list outlines the key shared elements of worship services. It is worth noting that preaching and the subsequent altar call were focal points of the service. Although the Lord's Supper or Communion was usually only served once per month, every worship experience (whether or not inclusive of the Lord's Supper) was designed to invoke intimacy or fellowship between each individual congregant and God.

[152] The African American Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals typically do not subscribe to the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Holy Spirit Manifestation in Corporate Worship

A sign of God's immediacy was the manifestation of Holy Spirit gifts. Consequently, evocation of gifts was an essential element of Pentecostal worship. As William C. Turner Jr. says, "The Spirit's presence in worship may well include prophecy, miracles, healing, and other manifestations known as the exercise of 'spiritual gifts'."[153] Turner goes on to footnote that "Although several New Testament passages list spiritual gifts (e.g., Romans 12, Ephesians 4), African American Holiness/Pentecostal/Apostolics tend to regard the enumeration of I Corinthians 12:7-10 as normative. They place special emphasis on the necessity of all 'nine gifts' in a church that is Spirit-filled."[154] The "nine gifts" are enumerated as follows:

> **7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. **8** To one is given through the Spirit the *utterance of wisdom*, and to another the *utterance of knowledge* according to the same Spirit, **9** to another *faith* by the same Spirit, to another gifts of *healing* by the one Spirit, **10** to another the working of *miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another the *discernment of spirits*, to another various kinds of *tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues*. (emphasis added. 1 Cor 12:7-10)

While Turner is correct in pointing out that the 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 text was used as a litmus for measuring a church body's spiritual efficacy, churches did not require that all nine gifts be in

[153] William C. Turner Jr, "Movements in the Spirit: A Review of African American Holiness/Pentecostal/Apostolics," in *Directory of African American Religious Bodies: A Compendium by the Howard University School of Divinity*, ed. Wardell J. Payne, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1995), 45.

[154] Ibid., 48–49.

effect in one church. Most put great emphasis on the gift of speaking in tongues, and relatively few placed emphasized on the interpretation of tongues, for example.[155]

Theology of Praise and Worship

Even at the very inception of black American Pentecostalism, its worship experience was laden with the corporate expectation of indubitable, if not tangible, encounter with God that would provide something essential for maintaining one's faith until the next worship gathering.[156] The primary vehicles for this encounter were prayer, praise and worship, and altar call. Praise and worship (P&W) was not just a style of song, but it was also a style of ecclesial presentation of music and congregational participation. Once P&W, as both a style of music and a liturgical act, became the norm in Pentecostal churches in the late 1990s, it became the portion of the service that bore the most expectation for palpable experience of the divine.[157]

In general, P&W was led by a small group of people who introduced new songs to the congregation and provided vocal support for that portion of the worship service. The praise and

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[155] I agree with Turner's statement that "Tongues-speaking is generally regarded as commonplace among African American Holiness/Pentecostal/Apostolics." I do not agree that tongues-speaking marks *the* central "high point in worship." Ibid., 45.

Often, the gift of "prophecy" is regarded as not only prophetic utterances, but also utterances of wisdom and knowledge. In Holiness/Apostolic/Pentecostal traditions, *to prophecy* does not mean "to speak truth to power" as it is defined in academic literature and social justice discourses. Instead, *to prophesy* is to speak words of wisdom, knowledge, warning, or foretelling by the unction of the Holy Spirit.

[156] Corporate worship is the gathering to honor symbols and enact rituals with the expectation of undeniable, efficacious encounter with God. Private, individual worship is beyond the scope of this chapter.

[157] The rise of praise and worship in African American evangelical churches, which is a platinum-age phenomenon, is narrated in another chapter.

worship leader directed that small team. Despite the presence of the team of singers, the congregation was expected to actively participate in singing and physical activity.

Praise and worship singing was usually accompanied or musically carried by a rhythm section that could have been as small as a keyboard, piano, or Hammond (electric) organ player and a drummer.[158] At prominent churches, it was normal to see instrumentalists on any or all of the keyboard and/or piano, drums, Hammond (electric) organ, bass guitar, and lead electric guitar. Some church music programs may have even included orchestras or brass ensembles.

Projectors were often used to display song lyrics on large screens, but the congregation was expected to quickly learn a song and join in singing, with or without visual aid.[159] Typically musical literacy among the congregants was neither expected nor required. When hymnals were used, the musical notation was often ignored as the congregation joined together to sing its own musical interpretation of a song.

The Tabernacle Model of Praise and Worship

Songs were presented in the P&W portion of the service in a particular order based on the presentation model adopted by the worship planners at a particular church. The P&W music presentation model could take several different forms motivated by a number of different biblical models for encounter with God. Various theologies of praise and worship have been developed

[158] While the guitar is the primary instrument of accompaniment in white evangelical praise and worship, the piano/keyboard/organ is the primary instrument for black evangelical praise and worship, with drums as a very close second.

[159] Black Pentecostal churches have historically employed "call-and-response group singing that does not require a printed text." Ramshaw, *Christian Worship*, 49.

to explain how the liturgy represents movement toward God. For example, both theologians Robert E. Webber and Robert Redman discuss what could easily be considered the most widely known theological treatment of praise and worship across evangelical denominations and sects.[160] This theology bases the transformative process of contemporary praise and worship on the design of the ancient Israelite tabernacle (Heb 9:1-7, Ex 25-26) or the Temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 6-7) and the high priest's movement within either of these places of worship. In the tabernacle (or in the Temple of Solomon), the high priest moved from outer court (temple vestibule), to inner court (temple nave), and ultimately into the Holy of Holies (temple inner sanctuary) in the process of ministry, with the expectation of encountering God.[161]

Using this P&W model, the music of the outer court was considered *praise music*. This loud, exuberant, and lively music invited and energized the congregants to praise God. Praise music was supposed to captivate and direct the attention of the congregant to communing with God rather than mulling over life's distractions. Praise music was relatively fast-paced and usually lent itself to congregational singing, clapping, and dancing.

The praise and worship music moved from *praise songs* of the outer court to *worship songs* for the inner court and Holy of Holies. Praise music was relatively fast, while worship music was slow and deliberate, or, at times, unmetered. After the worship leader(s) used praise

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[160] Note: theologian Robert E. Webber founded the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies. Robert E. Webber, "Praise and Worship Music: From Its Origins to Contemporary Use," *Pastoral Music* 27, no. 3 (February 2003): 21–23; Robert R. Redman, "Welcome to the Worship Awakening," *Theology Today* 58 (2001): 369–83.

[161] Michael David Coogan et al., eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, 3rd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 499.

music to muster the attention of the congregation, they used worship music to evoke the solemnity of encounter with God. This music sought to transmit the gravitas of communion with God. The work of the worship song was three-fold: 1) to acknowledge the awesome presence of God; 2) to encourage the congregant to give cares and burdens to God and focus on the present act of worship; and 3) to invite God to palpably manifest God's presence by the dynamic working of the Holy Spirit through charismata (1 Cor 12).

Spontaneous Elements of Pentecostal Worship

Signs of God's immediacy might manifest in spontaneous interruption of planned worship proceedings. Zora Neale Hurston describes Pentecostal worship by saying:

> Beneath the seeming informality of religious worship there is a set formality. Sermons, prayers, moans and testimonies have their definite forms. The individual may hang as many new ornaments upon the traditional form as he likes, but the audience would be disagreeably surprised if the form were abandoned. Any new and original elaboration is welcomed, however, and this brings out the fact that all religious expression among Negroes is regarded as art, and ability is recognized as definitely as in any other art.[162]

While Hurston speaks of particular portions of the service—the prayer, the sermon, a song, etc., the entire order in Pentecostal worship services had a "set formality" despite "seeming informality." Moreover, the order of service allowed for an inspired spontaneity. For example, the *shouting music*, or the fast-paced praise music to which congregants could dance, was not formally part of the liturgy. Yet, worship leaders encouraged spontaneous ecstatic dance and accompanying shouting music. The sudden evocation of glossolalia, or an impromptu call to pray corporately for an ailing congregant was not scripted, but the service programming was

[162] Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*, 83.

loose enough to allow for such extemporaneity. The Holy Spirit was invited to disrupt the scheduled programming; the order of service included enough planned informality to allow for song, prophetic utterances, or ecstatic dance to breakout.

Ecstatic Dance

Black Pentecostals have been key preservers of the "frenzy" or emotive physicality of slave religion.[163] "Shouting," or ecstatic dancing, and speaking in tongues were common occurrences in Sanctified worship; the roots of ecstatic dancing could be traced to the ring shouts of slaves. Black Baptists, on the other hand, were historically known for individual ecstatic outbursts which could be then be coupled with jubilant dancing. Pentecostal gospel singer Tasha Cobbs referred to this as the "Baptist fit" in her song "Christmas Praise – Live."[164] Yet, for Pentecostals, dancing was part of corporate worship, with a style of fast-paced, polyrhythmic, percussive music developed around the dance. For many Pentecostals, a worship service could feel incomplete if "praise music" or "shouting music" had not broken out at least once.

An example of music designed for black Pentecostal dance is the "War Cry," a chant and accompanying instrumental music popularized by Bishop Kenneth Moales Sr. of Bridgeport, CT.[165] Bishop Moales succeeded the "father of gospel music" Thomas Dorsey as president of the

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[163] Du Bois states that the black church's "preacher, music, and frenzy" made it unique. More than one hundred years later, his observation still holds. Although Du Bois's descriptions of black religiosity may have been tinged with a pejorative tone, ecstatic worship is celebrated in black megachurches and smaller churches across class lines. The "frenzy" is no longer stigmatized by black middle class churchgoers as it once was. W. E. B. Du Bois and of Virginia University, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Library, 1996), 134.

[164] Tasha Cobbs, *One Place Live (Deluxe Edition)*, MP3 (Motown Gospel, 2015).

[165] Musical analysis of the "War Cry" is provided in another chapter. "Bishop Moales Leads the War Cry!!," accessed November 12, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me3CWI6iR6U.

National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses (NCGCC) in 1993.[166] Two years later, Bishop Moales was installed as Presiding Prelate of the Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ, a denomination that was formed by ministers who, like Bishop Moales Sr., had broken away from COGIC. Bishop Moales's career as leader of the NCGCC and The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit further illustrates prominent black Pentecostal pastors' effect on gospel music and other prominent churches' liturgical practices. Moales's persona as a Pentecostal Bishop and champion for gospel music became synonymous with the "War Cry." By 2012, the war cry could be heard on any given Sunday in prominent churches of all denominations across the country. In 2015, years after Bishop Moales's death, the church that he founded still hailed itself as the "home of the war cry."[167]

Congregational Songs & Praise and Worship Music

COGIC was an incubator of "congregational songs," or the corporate, often fast paced, call-and-response songs whose style comes directly from the sacred music of African American slaves. In fact, many of the Smithsonian's recordings of former slaves include songs that could fit in COGIC church services certainly up to the late 1980s and even into the 1990s, before

[166] When Dorsey founded this national gospel convention, it was the first of its kind in the world, and marks the genesis of gospel music for some historians. Eventually the NCGCC's importance as a launching pad for national gospel artists was eclipsed by that of James Cleveland's Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA). NCGCC is still, however, a prominent platform, and its ranks of faithful attenders include national gospel artists Stephen Hurd, Freda Battle, Rodney Bryant, and Oscar Williams. Additionally, a number of nationally recognized musicians and producers frequent this convention, such as Cassondra O'Neal (who played for Prince and West Angeles COGIC), Kenneth "Kenny" Diggs (has played for Karen Clark Sheard and Vashawn Mitchell), and Kevin Kelly (who has played or produced for Kurt Carr).

[167] "Bishop Kenneth H. Moales, Sr. - Cathedral of the Holy Spirit," accessed November 12, 2015, http://cathedraloftheholyspirit.com/bishop-kenneth-h-moales-sr/.

COGIC made the major shift to praise and worship music as the dominant music form for prominent Pentecostal churches' worship services. Congregational songs are still sung at COGIC's Holy Convocation each year. By the late 1990s, urban praise and worship music had become a staple in megachurch worship services across denominations, thanks to Pentecostal artist Fred Hammond and the music department at West Angeles Church of God In Christ. [168]

(Bridled) Spontaneity of Testimonials

Historically, Pentecostals operated with an unbridled spontaneity supported by "testimony service" which was a part of worship in which a congregant could stand and sing a song, or orate a short testimony as she felt the unction or inclination. Effectively, anyone could temporarily take over the service. Over the last thirty years, prominent churches codified a *bridled* spontaneity. Mega-ministries moved to timed services, in order to accommodate television broadcasting requirements and/or the desire of working professionals to schedule other activities on their Sundays and weeknights. Furthermore, testimony services were practically eradicated from prime worship services (Sunday morning and Saturday night weekly services). Gospel icon Fred Hammond, who began his spiritual formation in an Apostolic church and later joined a non-denominational church, gave another important rationale for phasing out testimony service:

> See, back in the day we used to have testimony service. … Now, the pastors have had to cut the testimony service out, because some of us just don't know how to testify. [Giving an example of a poor testimony,] "I wanna thank and praise the Lord for being saved. I wanna thank and praise the Lord for being here one more day. And you know, saints, the devil was with me last night, and...." We

[168] The rise of praise and worship music among African American churches is detailed in another chapter.

> say some really dumb stuff. Then we hype him up, and then we say, "Pray for me 'cause I'm tired."
>
> So the pastor's like, "Alright, we trying to move into this new thing [praise and worship sans testimony service]." Because God is speaking in a today-generation voice….
>
> But I can remember going to church, over at my grandmother's house. Some of y'all ain't going to get excited, but some of y'all will. But, at my grandmother's house. It would be about four women. And they was old, but they would make [their] way down that hill, into that old house. … And, I got caught in a prayer meeting one day. Notice I said I got caught. I was about 9 or 10. I was trying to get out, and they said, "Sit down!" Somebody would stand up in the room. One of them old mother's would stand up and say, [female voice singing] "Jesus is all…."[169]

Hammond comedically recounted the shifts he saw from the country or "back-woods" corporate religious practice of his grandmother during the late 1960s and early 1970s, to a more controlled worship style that was well in effect by the late 1990s when he recorded the introduction to "Jesus Is All" for his P*ages of Life – Chapters I & II* project. Unscreened and unscripted testimonials had been all but eliminated in megachurches. Yet the Pentecostal idea of spontaneity had a great deal of currency in the megachurch, because it represented the Holy Spirit's interrupting and animating presence. The result was a bridled spontaneity. An artist or speaker could be as spontaneous as he or she desired for the allotted amount of time that she had been given. She could exhort the congregation to dance ecstatically; she could embellish her solo until

[169] "Jesus is All (Intro)," Fred Hammond and Radical For Christ, *Pages of Life - Chapters I & II*, CD, 1998.

the most obstinate observer was roused to applaud. Yet, she risked her microphone getting cut off mid-sentence if she went a minute over allotted time. [170]

Theology of Anointing

Even as late as 2015, many if not most COGIC Pentecostals considered themselves to be adherents to *Holiness* doctrine. Historian David Daniels III explains, "Beginning as a Holiness fellowship among African American Baptists in 1895 in the mid-South region of the United States, a faction of the fellowship led by Charles Harrison Mason in 1907 would join others in mounting the emerging Pentecostal movement."[171] Practical theologian Antipas Harris provides a constructive theology of Holiness.

> In a nutshell, holiness is neither legalism nor antinomianism; but rather, holiness is being and acting in a way that reflects both a regenerated life in Christ and the ongoing renewal in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the conditioning of the heart; it means to be in love with God and to live out that love through obedience to God and by expressing God's love to a world that does not know God on its own terms.[172]

Harris goes on to explain that the Pentecostal church of his youth stressed holiness:

> With Church of God In Christ as our heritage, our church emphasized holiness and baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. . . . It was necessary to be born again. To be born again meant to be saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost. Receiving Christ into our hearts

[170] I overheard some artists jesting about microphones getting turned off, or not getting an opportunity to address the congregation again should an artist/speaker go over his/her allotted time.

[171] David D. Daniels III, "Vision of Christian Unity on the Ecumenical Landscape and Soundscape: A Pentecostal Ecumenical Engagement," in *Ecumenical Directions in the United States Today: Churches on a Theological Journey*, ed. Antonios Kireopoulos and Juliana Mecera (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 272.

[172] Antipas L. Harris, *Holy Spirit, Holy Living: Toward a Practical Theology of Holiness for Twenty-First Century Churches* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), xix.

> with public confession of baptism was important but [*sic*] it was not considered the fullness of the rebirth. As in the Wesleyan tradition, salvation was the first step or initial blessing, holiness or sanctification was the second step or blessing, and the baptism of the Spirit was the third blessing.[173]

Harris then references the exilic lifestyle which Holiness churches championed.

> Historically, holiness-pentecostal [*sic*] churches have stood out because of their emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit and their unapologetic willingness to live out their faith with recognizable distinction.[174]

To "live out" one's faith with "recognizable distinction" was to be sanctified, and for Black Pentecostals, *the anointing* was evidence of a sanctified life. Eugene McCoy defined the anointing as he explained the significance of Dr. Mattie Moss Clark's ministry in his biography of the late COGIC music department president:

> The anointing was the foundation of Dr. Clark's life and ministry. It is that manifestation of the Holy Ghost that imparts ongoing power to effectively accomplish whatever the Lord has said to do.[175]

The anointing was related to the lifestyle of the artist. The artist had to adhere to holiness in order to see the full manifestation of the anointing in her life. Unholy living hindered God's work through the artist. In other words, one's anointing was tied to one's sanctification. In an article published in the Fall 1989 issue of *Rejoice!* magazine, a magazine devoted to scholarly and popular writing about gospel music, Gospel artist and scholar James Boyer describes COGIC's particular adherence to holiness codes for the display of the anointing as follows:

> COGIC singers were expected to be more than talented and gifted. They were expected to sing "under the anointing" and they were expected to hold a major

[173] Ibid., 4.

[174] Ibid., 5.

[175] McCoy, *Climbing Up the Mountain*, 19.

> commitment to the music as "church music." [COGIC Founder and composer] Bishop Mason left a legacy of holiness as an uncompromising stance. Networking, verification, and holiness familiarity extended to the music. Authenticity was essential"[176]

While Boyer did not explicitly define "authenticity," it is clear that demonstrable presence of the Holy Spirit through one's singing or playing constituted authentic rendering of gospel music. Boyer also seems to imply that a song's authenticity as true "church music" had to be verified, as well.[177]

The anointing was so important that it was a common subject in songs recorded by COGIC choirs and artists. COGIC's International Mass Choir sang "The Anointing Breaks the Yoke" (1986), with legendary gospel songwriter and organist Twinkie Clark growling her lead vocals.[178] The song's lyrics spelled out this Pentecostal theology of sanctification:

> Do you have an anointing?
> You need an anointing?
>
> The anointing breaks the yoke, breaks the yoke, breaks the yoke
>
> Lead: You cannot live anyway that you want to
> Choir: separated, consecrated
> Lead: You cannot do anything that want to
> Choir: separated, consecrated
> Lead: You've got to be clean and you've got to be holy
> Choir: separated, consecrated
> Lead: Seek him with your whole heart and give him the glory
> Choir: separated, consecrated

[176] Boyer, "Gospel Music in the COGIC Tradition," 16.

[177] Bishop Mason was the founder of the Church of God in Christ, and composer of many of the church's signature congregational songs. Ibid., 15.

[178] The Clark Sisters helped to popularize the vocal technique of growling in the 1980s. By the mid-1980s, the growl was very popular, and female gospel soloists were obliged to learn how to execute this vocal feat. The growl lost popularity by the mid 1990s as artists relaxed the compulsion to "sing hard."

The anointing it will break the yoke. The anointing it will break the yoke.

Lead: The anointing
Choir: it breaks
Lead: The anointing
Choir: it breaks the yoke[179]

The song explained that the anointing did the work of breaking any yoke of spiritual bondage that a person might have. Only those who lived a "separated, consecrated" or sanctified life could operate with the anointing to break yokes, or cause other people to be delivered from bondage. If one wanted to have the anointing, she could not live any kind of way, nor do any and everything that she wanted to do; instead she had to submit to a life of holiness.

The Clark Sisters recorded a similar song in 1989 entitled "Take Me Higher" on their *Conqueror* album. The first verse stated:

Woke up one morning
Felt the anointing all over me
I cried out Lord
Please don't take your spirit from me
Each day I find myself praying and saying yes Lord
Anoint me the more
That yokes can be destroyed[180]

Again, the songwriter made the connection between "consecrated" living and the power of the anointing to break yokes.[181]

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[179] COGIC International Mass Choir, *Mattie Moss Clark Presents The C.O.G.I.C. International Mass Choir "A Song Is Born" UNAC 5 Houston 986*, LP, 1986.

[180] Clark Sisters, *Conqueror*, LP, 1989.

[181] Ibid.

Where is the Oil?

In the platinum age, "the anointing" became common nomenclature in prominent megachurches across denomination—not just in Holiness or Pentecostal churches. Often, the expression "the oil" was used synonymously with "the anointing" to signify the unique empowerment to do work for God. Also during the platinum age, churchgoers no longer treated many aspects of black Christian life, including worship practices and theologies such as the theology of the anointing, as sacred or esoteric. Instead, with the aid of gospel comedy, social media, and televangelism, all things became accessible for appropriation and mockery in popular culture and entertainment. In the process, some terms—such as *the anointing*—and practices associated with these terms lost their symbolic power in translation to popular culture. By 2015, *the anointing* and *the oil* had become so ubiquitous in black popular culture that these terms were used in articles and memes to describe any artist's ability to execute a moving or entertaining rendition, as seen in the meme below (Figure 2.1).[182] The meme is based on an image of gospel stars Tremaine Hawkins (left), Pastor Shirley Ceasar (middle), and Dottie Peoples (right), as the three sang together at the 2010 Stellar Awards. The meme depicts the gospel divas as church mothers incredulously observing (and judging) pop icon Beyonce's 2015 Grammy Awards appearance. This meme criticized Beyonce's rendition of Thomas Dorsey's traditional gospel

[182] A discussion of secularized black Christianity in the new millennium is needed to fully explain the relationship between black popular culture and black evangelicalism. The meme is taken from Tasha Crichlow, "Church Mothers Listening to Beyonce's 'Take My Hand Precious Lord' Like...," February 8, 2015, accessed September 29, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10153104543124479&set=p.10153104543124479&type=1&theater.

standard “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” as lackluster and bereft of anointing or Holy-Spirit



Figure 2.1 Meme posted on Facebook by Tasha Chrichlow. Accessed September 29, 2015.

heft. In this case, her singing did not have power to move one’s emotions, much less break a yoke of spiritual bondage.

Revised Sanctification Theology and Implications for Music & Entertainment

While pastors of megachurches and non-denominational churches were adopting the aforementioned Pentecostal liturgical theologies concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship during the 1980s and 1990s, they did not adopt the Pentecostals’ strict

theology of sanctification. Furthermore, many pastors who had come out of Pentecostal traditions greatly relaxed the measurements of piety, or to put another way, they greatly widened that net of "separated, consecrated" activities and dispositions. Consequently, artists were called anointed, regardless of whether or not they lived "consecrated" and "separated" and from the world. This revised theology of sanctification allowed Pentecostal artists to do record covers of popular secular songs and openly collaborate with popular artists, without ecclesial sanction. Karen Clark-Sheard's own mother was reprimanded by the COGIC leadership after singing a *gospel* song on the 1983 Grammy Awards. Yet, Karen Clark-Sheard collaborated with R&B singer Faith Evans on the *Finally Karen* album (1997), and in 2003 released a gospel cover of neo-soul artist Jill Scott's "He Loves Me (Lyzel in E Flat)" without incident.

Further demonstrating the theological shift that had taken place in COGIC by 2008, Bishop J. Drew Sheard, Karen's husband and a national leader in COGIC, stated in the *TvOne* documentary series *Unsung* (2008), "It [the ecclesial reprimand for appearing on the 1983 Grammy Awards] was unwarranted. They [Mattie Moss Clark and the Clark Sisters] didn't do anything. They had on long dresses. They were covered up. They were expressing on national TV what we do in our churches. It was absolutely unwarranted."[183] As a COGIC Bishop in 2008 when the *Unsung* episode about the Clark Sisters aired, Bishop Sheard was renouncing the stance that the COGIC leadership had taken some twenty-five years earlier. In so doing, Bishop Sheard himself represented the seismic shift in theology of sanctification among leadership in

[183] "Unsung The Clark Sisters Part 4 of 7 -- Youtube."

prominent ecclesiastical spaces. In fact, he, his wife, and children went on to star in their own reality TV show on *BET* entitled *The Sheards*.

This theology represented a shift among Pentecostals; now, you could listen to secular music, and explicitly draw from secular music for worship purposes.[184] With this revised theology of sanctification, all forms of music could potentially be used to glorify God. Moreover, music reflecting the contemporary (musical) culture was an evangelizing tool. Hence, the line between sacred and "secular" (or popular) music was grey and blurred at best. Potentially, any genre or style of music could be employed to effect worship, including but not limited to traditional hymns, black gospel music in all its forms, spirituals, contemporary Christian, R&B, hip hop, and rock.[185]

Bishop Winans declared that he had *not* gone with this trend in his own church. In the following exchange he declared that the official stance of his church was more traditional than most.

> CB: Now you mentioned back then you couldn't listen to certain things, are you talking about those kind of rules of holiness and that sort of thing?

[184] While black church musicians have always been known both to move between secular spaces, such as the juke joint and club, and the church, and to cross-pollinate both spaces with the other's music. Because congregants and church leaders were ostensibly not listening to popular music, many instrumental references to popular music forms and even specific popular songs often escaped scrutiny. The singer or the worship leader, however, was held to a higher standard of public piety. When pastors relaxed the rules of piety, there was much more referencing popular music and culture in churches and especially among gospel artists.

[185] Although all music forms could potentially be used in liturgy, certain cultural and/or liturgical contexts may render some music forms ineffective.

> MW: Absolutely. To this day, I don't listen to R&B music. To this day, I've never bought a record, because that's just not what we did. And I know a lot of folk that changed.
>
> They'd say, "your music sounds like this, [some popular music form]" but then I didn't hear [it]. I was telling my church just this past week in Bible class, I said, "A lot of that stuff, I couldn't listen to because I was a musician, and that stuff will get in your spirit." I would tell them, "I didn't know the words." But, … I don't understand what people are doing nowadays, what they call music. But, The Stylistics? Please! 'Betcha By Golly Wow!' A great song is a great song is a great song. And so what we were concerned about was the origin and where it would take you, because music takes you places, and no matter how folk wanna deny that, music takes you where you wanna go. And, there's some places that as a young person, as a young believer, I didn't need to go.[186]

Bishop Winans was known as an "old-school" Pentecostal; he had resisted revised theologies to which most prominent Pentecostal pastors had subscribed. The aforementioned exchange makes clear that choices about liturgical music pointed to theologies of sanctification. Before the theological shift in which all genres of music could be employed for the glory of God, Pentecostals held that to even listen to secular music was worldly at best and sinful at worst. To study secular music threatened one's salvation, because "music takes you places" outside the realm of holiness that Pentecostals were supposed to inhabit. Although, Bishop Winans asserted that he did not actively study or patronize secular music, it is clear that he was exposed to a range of music as a musician. Yet, for the purposes of maintaining his sanctification—which was tantamount to maintaining salvation, he refrained from immersing himself in popular music.

Bishop Winans related this theological shift to the gospel industry as a whole when he said:

[186] Winans, interview.

> And a lot of times … I get asked questions because back then [1980s and early 1990s], The Winans stayed on tour. We kept packed houses, and folk wanna know why the gospel [promotors today] think they have to put about twelve people on the show to try to get ten people to come. And they asked, "Why [has it been so difficult for contemporary artists to draw crowds the way the Winans used to]?"
>
> I said [in response], back then, you couldn't go to see India Arie [a popular neo-soul artist] and sing on the praise and worship team. [If you went to a secular concert] you could go to the altar when you got back [but not to the platform to lead worship]. But now, the reason [gospel concert attendance suffers is]... If it's okay for me to do that [sing on the P&W team], and I've got a chance to hear India Arie or a gospel knock off and I still have Jesus, I'm going to hear the real thing.
>
> People waited for The Winans to come, [and] they waited for [gospel artist] Richard Smallwood … to show up in a tour, because we were it for them. They told their children, "You can't go to that [secular show], but you can come and see The Winans." But now, hey, they go see anything they want and brag about it, put it on Facebook and in the praise and worship team and worship theme on Sunday.[187]

The truth of that statement was seen in a Facebook video post of a P&W team singing a cover of hip hop star Drake's then latest hit single "Hotline Bling."[188] The video posted by the Facebook account of contemporary gospel group 21:30 was an apparent excerpt from a Christian worship service. The original song "Hotline Bling" portrayed Drake's nostalgic recollection of an ex-lover who used to call him on his cellphone when she was feeling amorous. In the two weeks prior to the posting of this remake, Drake's original had garnered a great deal of attention

[187] Ibid.

[188] 21:03, "'Hotline Bling' Praise and Worship Remix," *Facebook.com*, accessed November 9, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10153685891923485.

because of Drake's eccentric dancing in the music video.[189] Drake's song, or specifically the plethora of memes parodying Drake's dancing in the video, was the rage, along with Adele's instant pop classic "Hello." Clearly striving to capitalize on the popularity and recognition of Drake's "Hotline Bling," the worship leaders had changed the lyrics of the hook from "You used to call me on my cellphone / Late night when you need my love" to "You always call me 'cause I'm Yours, Lord. / Calling me back to Love." Even the secularized platinum-age gospel boy band 21:03 recognized that this wholesale adaptation of that particular secular song should be interrogated. See 21:03's message attached to the video post on Facebook (Figure 2.2).[190]

[189] DrakeVEVO, "Drake - Hotline Bling," accessed November 9, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxpDa-c-4Mc.

[190] The screenshot of the 15-second video clip shows that the words were projected for the congregation to sing along. This and the band's uncanny reproduction of the original's signature steel drum sounds, showed that the worship team had been intentional about incorporating the remake of "Hotline Bling" into the worship experience. They spent some time on this. The full version of the remake was posted on Youtube by WYMT Television. Gospel comedian KevOnStage also posted the full video on Facebook. 21:03, "'Hotline Bling' Praise and Worship Remix"; WYMT Television, "Church Does Gospel Version of 'Hotline Bling,'" accessed November 12, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRagR_R5nZI; KevOnStage, "Hotline Bling: Churchy Version FULL VIDEO," *Facebook.com*, accessed November 12, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/KevOnStage/videos/10153189229208309/?pnref=story.

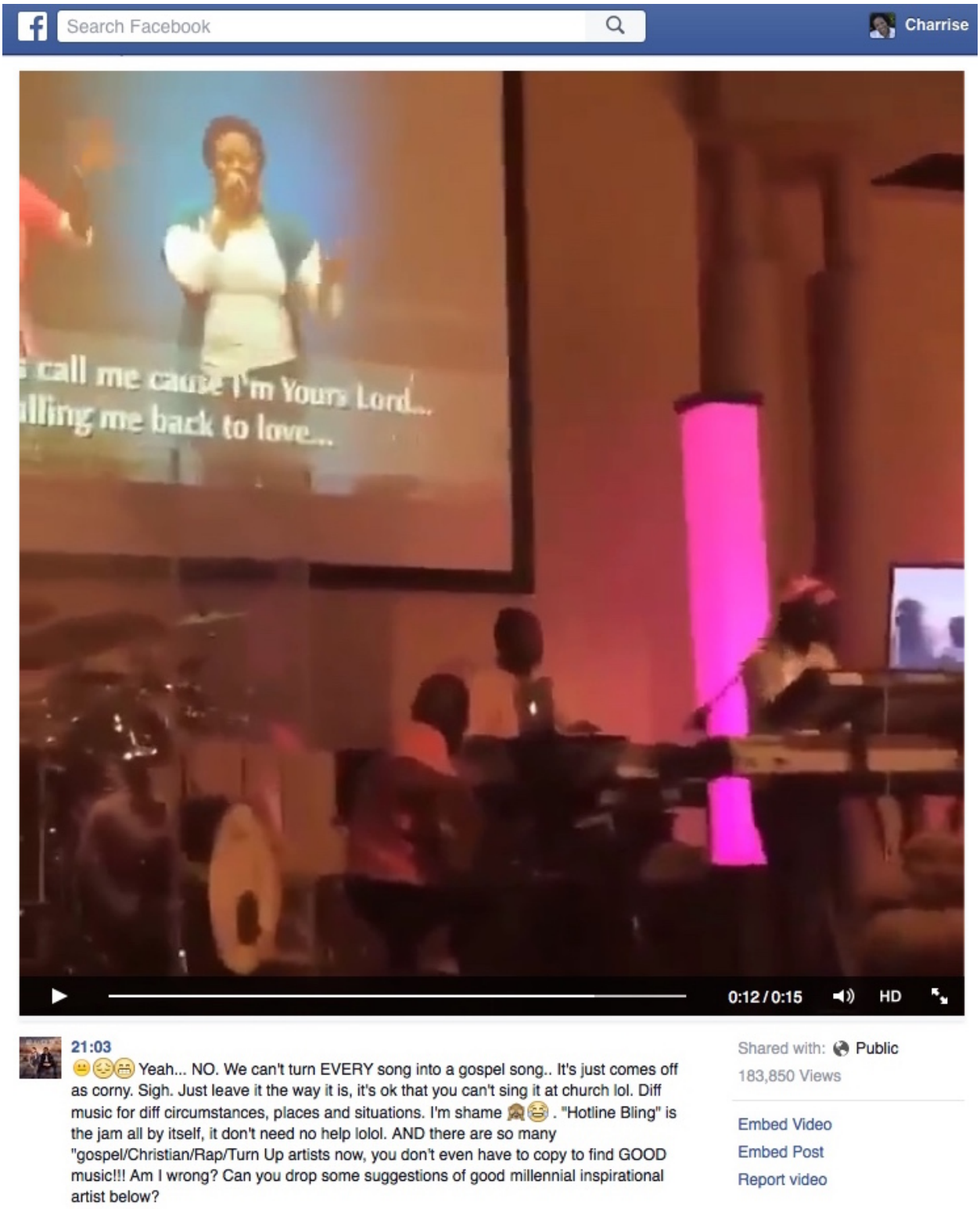


Figure 2.2 "Hotline Bling" Praise and Worship Remix. Worship Service Excerpt Posted on Facebook by Gospel Group 21:03

The caption reads as follows:

> Yeah…NO. We can't turn EVERY song into a gospel song.. [*sic*] It just comes off as corny. Sigh. Just leave it the way it is, it's ok that you can't sing it at church lol. Diff [different] music for diff circumstances, places and situations. I'm shame. "Hotline Bling" is the jam all by itself, it don't need no help lolol. AND there are so many gospel/Christian/Rap/Turn Up artists now, you don't even have to copy to find GOOD music!!! Am I wrong? Can you drop some suggestions of good millennial inspirational artist [*sic*] below? (emojis omitted).[191]

Leaving the Ninety-Nine

Besides the problematic practice of introducing secular music into gospel, Bishop Winans bemoaned the fact that pastors were also participating in the consumption of secular entertainment:

> I have pastors coming to me and saying, "Ooh, I went and saw Gladys Knight." [My thought is:] "You went and saw who? And you're telling people?" I mean all the pastors.
>
> I was in an airport. I got stopped in the airport by this older gentlemen, because he saw me on … *I Can Do Bad All By Myself*. ... And so he said, "Oh, Lord! I saw you in that movie." And I say, "Oh, praise God!" And he said, "Yeah, and my church sent me for my birthday, when Gladys Knight was in town."[192]
>
> …
>
> CB: Do you feel [as if] COGIC, on the national level, has become less strict about piety? [For example], you can be on the Praise Team even if you went to see Prince, or India Arie, or [some secular artist] the night before?
>
> MW: I think that's dangerous…. I think it sends the wrong message to our children. I really do.
>
> And that's been a problem, … because we're more into accommodation than we are transformation. And …I don't think that's restricted to COGIC. I think that's the church, internationally. The whole mindset is … pardon my crassness,

[191] 21:03, "'Hotline Bling' Praise and Worship Remix."

[192] Winans, interview.

> … the whole mentality of a promoter—how many butts are in the seats. I was at this church, pretty large church, in Los Angeles, [with] a white pastor, a predominantly white congregation. And I asked the pastor, I said, "How many people do you have?" "Oh man, we don't look at that." [They have in attendance] in the weekend, … about 10,000 people a weekend. And so, afterwards, [I asked], "[Do] people join?" "We don't even ask." They don't even ask people to join.[193]

Bishop Winans was troubled by that pastor's desire to have people fill the seats without calling the people to the spiritual accountability inherent in joining a church.

Pastor Winans's appearance in the Tyler Perry movie *I Can Do Bad All By Myself*, and his numerous collaborations with secular artists appeared to contradict his admonitions to his congregants and especially his church's music staff, to abstain from secular music and other forms of entertainment. To be sure, Bishop Winans and his brothers have done a significant amount of work with secular artists. Their collaboration with R&B diva Anita Baker entitled "Ain't No Need to Worry" reached " No. 18 hit on Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Singles & Tracks chart in 1987."[194]

The Winans later recorded "Everyday The Same" (1990) with R&B legend Stevie Wonder, "Payday" (1993) with R&B/hip hop artist R. Kelly, "When You Cry" (1990) with jazz saxophonist Kenny G, and "It's Time" (1990) with new jack swing producer Teddy Riley. The Winans also provided background vocals on pop icon Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror."

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[193] Ibid.

[194] "Winans Anthologized As Family Tour Nears," *Billboard.com*, April 5, 2002, accessed November 9, 2015, http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/76229/winans-anthologized-as-family-tour-nears.

Yet, Bishop Winans argued that his work was for evangelization.[195] Moreover, he had to overcome his own reservations in order to play the small role of a pastor singing during the altar call in *I Can Do Bad All By Myself*. Playwright-turned-movie mogul Tyler Perry had visited Bishop Winans's church while he was in town acting in the play by the same name. Bishop Winans went to see the play after Tyler Perry visited Perfecting Church.

> And it [Tyler Perry's play] was sold out, and that was intriguing. Fox [Theatre where the play was showing] is a difficult house to sell out. And he had sold it out—and sold it out several times. So, I went and I watched how he just controlled that audience…. Anyway, a long story short, they called, … and they said that Tyler wanted me to be in a play. I said, "I'm not an actor, … and plus I don't like the way y'all make the church look. I'm a preacher for real. I don't like when folk make fun of the church." And so we had a discussion….He said, "Man, this is gonna bless your ministry and you're gonna be able to reach more people." They're still getting me with that line, don't they?
>
> [They told me] "You're gonna be able to reach more people and tell more folk about the gospel." And they were right.
>
> And, Gladys [Knight, R&B star who sings in the movie scene with Pastor Winans] is a personal friend of mine, but I don't go to those shows. And, if I do, you better know there's a reason why I was on stage with [pop-music sex symbol] Prince. Yeah, 'cause they called and said he wanted to meet with me because he's talked about changing, and he was this, that, and the other. And I said, "Wow! Okay." And I went, and he sat in the thing off the stage so I could have an opportunity to talk with him. I'll go anywhere for a soul, I'll leave ninety-nine.[196]

[195] His rationale—that he was doing the work to win souls—was reminiscent of Walton's definition of neo-Pentecostalism.

[196] Winans, interview.

Bishop Winans referenced the parable of the lost sheep to explain that taking his ministry outside of the church (where the "ninety-nine" believers are) is necessary in order to reach even a single lost soul.[197]

Conclusion

COGIC music department vice president Kim Burrell serenaded pop diva Whitney Houston during the 2010 *BET Honors* awards show with a beautifully melismatic rendition of Houston's "I Believe in You and Me." Not only that, but Burrell sang the tribute in a form hugging black dress with her right shoulder exposed. Burrell released the music video for her single "Sweeter" the following spring, and the opening scene featured Burrell in a lacy negligee. Yet, during COGIC's A.I.M. convention of 2011, which is one of the largest conventions that COGIC holds each year, Burrell appeared to carry out her duties as a vice president of COGIC's music department without any repercussions for her appearances on secular stages and her worldly attire choices.[198] Kim Burrell was given official freedom to explore her connection to secular

[197] The gospel of Luke provides Jesus Christ's parable of the lost sheep:

> **Luke 15:1** Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him [Jesus]. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."**3** So he told them this parable: **4** "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? **5** When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' **7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Lk 15:1-7)

[198] In this case, Burrell's attire was not just "worldly," or not spiritual, but may have also been considered provocative by some.

music without losing access to COGIC's national platforms where only a few decades earlier, Dr. Mattie Moss Clark was reprimanded for taking *gospel* music to a black mainstream awards show.

Pentecostals had always considered themselves to be separated from the world—in the world but not of it.[199] At the same time, gospel artists perpetually complicated what should be deemed in the world but not of it. In the platinum age, prominent pastors had caught up with the sanctification theology of gospel artists, and the result was greater exposure for gospel artists to large church platforms without penalty for collaborating with the worldly.

Gospel music has always been in conversation and even cahoots with secular music. Yet, in the platinum age, the gospel music industry focused on crossing over to mainstream charts and growing mainstream audiences, and gospel artists sought to diversify their entertainment portfolios accordingly. Over the last twenty-five years, gospel artists worked hard to both appeal to the unchurched and build personal and professional relationships with mainstream artists and producers.

Dr. McCullough's reproof at the 2015 PFI Holy Convocation that the church had become "too secular" highlighted the theological shift, in prominent Pentecostal spaces, to a more secularized sanctification and concomitant recalibration of piety that favored contemporary crossover gospel artistry. Shifts in theologies among prominent black churches made it easier for gospel artists to appeal to both mainstream and Christian markets.

[199] This fits Niebuhr's depiction of Christ against culture. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*.

By the start of the platinum age, Sanctified liturgy was sweeping prominent black churches. Something is always lost in assimilation into dominant culture—even assimilation into dominant black church culture. In this case, old standards of piety were jettisoned as Pentecostal corporate worship aesthetics and the related liturgical theologies were adopted among prominent churches. The symbolism of the anointing was adopted, without the correlated self-sacrificing practices that holiness traditions had previously demanded.

Some might say that this was merely a reflection of consumer culture infiltrating the last bastion of separation from the world—the black Pentecostal church.[200] Because megachurch pastors and gospel artists desired to make money, they marketed the gospel to a larger pool of consumers than just churchgoers. While some artists may have been driven more by markets than ministry, the prominent pastors codified a sophisticated theology of sanctification that recalibrated piety to allow for all manner of interaction with contemporary culture, as we shall see in the following chapters.

[200] Historian Evelyn Higginbotham made this suggestion as we discussed my dissertation prospectus.

Chapter 3
Sexy for Jesus: Accessible Performance of Gospel Music

If their self-titled reality show is to be believed, the singing group Mary Mary was ecstatic to receive an invitation to sing on the "mainstage" of the 2012 Essence Music Festival in New Orleans, Louisiana.[201] This annual African American music and culture festival began in 1994 to celebrate *Essence* Magazine's 25th Anniversary. Every year since then, thousands of people have gathered at the festival to hear the biggest stars in African American popular music. There were a number of music venues at the festival, but the mainstage was typically reserved for elite artists, such as soul singer Aretha Franklin, hip hop soul star Mary J. Blige, and neo-soul crooner D'Angelo.

Yet, Mary Mary is a gospel group; such groups do not often get invited to sing on the mainstage. Gospel music was (and is) popular, but still marginalized. Biological sisters Tina Campbell and Erica Campbell constitute the singing group, "Mary Mary." The name Mary Mary reflects biblical figures Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The sisters are signaling that they represent and identify with every woman from the perfect or uber-pious, like Mary mother of Jesus, to those shrouded in scandal, like Mary Magdalene.

Mary Mary's determination to sing on the main stage of the Essence Festival, as detailed on the second season of the group's reality show (*Mary Mary* on WeTV), highlighted their

[201] "Fight of a Lifetime," *Mary Mary* (WeTV, January 2013); "Pregnant Pause," *Mary Mary* (WeTV, January 2013); "Essence of Conflict," *Mary Mary* (WeTV, February 2013).

intense focus on reaching mainstream audiences, not just churchgoers or gospel aficionados. According to the show, Tina admittedly pushed herself to the limit by singing while she was in her final trimester of pregnancy with her son Santana.[202] Mary Mary was not alone in the quest to attract and maintain audiences outside of the church. Gospel artists have historically had a consumer base of churchgoers, even as they worked to take their music to the world outside of the church. But over the last two decades, the gospel industry has made a significant push to market and distribute gospel music to black popular music audiences. This chapter outlines the practices of female gospel artists in the platinum age who have had significant crossover success.[203] Their deportment exemplifies gospel artists' efforts to appeal to mainstream consumers rather than just church goers. The work of Mary Mary will be used to explain this *performance of accessibility.*

Part of Mary Mary's performance of accessibility was the demonstrative expression of sexuality. Many gospel artists, including the Marys, saw conspicuous displays of sexuality as a means to model for churchgoers how to live more abundantly, or live in the freedom of sexual expression—as encouraged by the American entertainment industry. By gospel's platinum age, prominent churches had accepted (and in some cases perhaps encouraged) more conspicuous displays of gender and sexuality, as long as it was within the bounds of heteronormative sexuality and gender expression—at least in the case of women. Black men have historically

[202] "Fight of a Lifetime"; "Pregnant Pause"; "Essence of Conflict."

[203] Another chapter outlines male gospel artists' performance of accessibility, by focusing on the work of gospel artist Kirk Franklin.

been allowed greater range of gender expression than women in black evangelical churches, as discussed in chapter 4.

Performance of Accessibility

By the early 2000s, gospel artists had developed a sophisticated set of behaviors to render themselves relatable or "accessible" to black mainstream audiences. I call this set of behaviors for gaining respect and market share in a mainstream market, a *performance of accessibility*. This performance of accessibility is a departure from what historian Evelyn Higginbotham identifies as the "politics of respectability," which she uses to describe black Baptist church women's response to white Americans' perceptions of black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. Higginbotham states:

> Duty-bound to teach the value of religion, education, and hard work, the women of the black Baptist church adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group. They felt certain that "respectable" behavior in public would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America, and hence they strove to win the black lower class's psychological allegiance to temperance, industriousness, thrift, refined manners, and Victorian sexual morals.[204]

The politics of respectability provided a moral authority by which poor and middle-class black Baptist women could demand respect in American society.[205] The politics of respectability was an ideology concerned with: encouraging poor people to have respect for themselves, demanding rights in American society for black people, and not allowing wrongdoers' behavior

[204] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14.

[205] Kimberly Foster, "Wrestling with Respectability in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter: A Dialogue," ForHarriet.com, *For Harriet | Celebrating the Fullness of Black Womanhood*, (2015, accessed April 28, 2017), http://www.forharriet.com/2015/10/wrestling-with-respectability-in-age-of.html.

to hinder the progress black people were making in race relations. In addition to personal, religious working, the politics of respectability was a means to a political end; that end was to uplift the African American population, or to give social power to black women and men in society through a set of behaviors that comported with white middle-class norms. It was a collective work, as much as it required individuals to take action.[206]

The performance of accessibility, on the other hand, addresses the gaze of the popular music consumer, rather than merely the gaze of racially incredulous white Americans. Performance of accessibility is the set of principles and behaviors employed to appear relatable in popular culture, thereby gaining power in the music marketplace. Gospel artists want to establish accessible identities in order to access commercial power and social capital, rather than governmental power. This has been a decidedly apolitical move on the part of gospel artists, unlike the Baptist church women in the early 1900s who proffered the politics of respectability for individual edification and collective racial uplift. In this sense, it is more fitting to describe the work of these gospel artists as a *performance* of accessibility, rather than a *politics* of accessibility.

Religion historian Bradford Verter's conception of "spiritual capital" is particularly useful to describe the process by which gospel artists garner and employ their influence for economic and social gain. [207] Verter's definition of spiritual capital expands sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's "religious capital." Whereas religious capital was circulated and gained only by the

[206] While Higginbotham illuminates black Baptist women's employment of politics of respectability, application of such politics is not a gender-exclusive enterprise.

[207] Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu."

priests, prophets, and musicians, or those in positions of ecclesial prominence, laypeople can produce, invest, and divest "spiritual capital" of its value. Historically, gospel artists gained spiritual capital within churches by their ostensible adherence to piety codes.[208] This spiritual capital could then be traded for economic capital, as gospel artists sold their religious wares to ecclesial audiences who were familiar with the codes of piety. These codes often included distancing oneself from accoutrements of contemporary culture.

Verter states, "The value of spiritual capital is determined not just by professionals but also by the laity, and this fact undermines the autonomy of the religious field."[209] Perhaps Verter's definition of "spiritual capital" should be expanded to include the unchurched as possessors of the power to produce, invest, or divest gospel artists' spiritual capital of its value. Today, spiritual capital may be determined by laity, but as gospel artists increase their respective fan bases of unchurched consumers, laity lose power to the unchurched. The increased base of unchurched gospel consumers buffers artists from financial harm when the laity withhold support or chastise an artist through social media. Financial harm is also minimized by new codes of piety sanctioned by leaders of large ecclesial platforms; the new codes make it much easier for gospel artists to publicly display piety, thereby potentially winning the approval and support of the laity. The prominent church pastors and others in positions of authority continue to provide access and support to gospel artists even while the clergy at smaller churches (which make up the majority of churches in America) and laity, at small and large churches alike, may not agree.

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[208] See second chapter for more discussion of theologies of piety.

[209] Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," 164.

Christ and Culture

Of course, it is easy to attribute this desire to be hip to market forces. To be fair, most gospel artists did not state to me that they were just trying to use their spiritual capital to make money. Instead, gospel artists felt that their work was to "reach souls," or evangelize, through their music. Platinum-age crossover gospel artists communicated that their top priority was evangelizing unchurched people, and they saw accessibility as the key to that evangelizing success.[210] To be accessible was to be relatable and even appealing to mainstream audiences. A consequence of this focus on mainstream consumers was the musical neglect of faithful churchgoers and worship planners in local churches who relied on recording artists to supply new music for worship services.

Crossover gospel artists adopted a set of behaviors designed to gain the attention and acceptance of people who were part of contemporary popular culture, but not necessarily steeped in black American church culture. The gospel artists argued that one could not witness the gospel of Christ to the unchurched, if one could not grab and hold the attention of the unchurched. Gospel artists created crossover music in an effort (at least in part) to hold the attention of the unchurched. While churchgoers certainly made up part of the mainstream audience, gospel artists directed their attention to the gaze of *unchurched* mainstream consumers. In this way, gospel artists sought to represent what ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr describes as "Christ *in* culture" rather than "Christ against culture."[211]

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[210] Gospel artists do not use the word "accessibility." Instead they say that they must be "relevant" and "look good." Some also describe themselves or others as "sexy for Jesus."

[211] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*.

Key Components of Accessible Performance

In order to craft and maintain an accessible image on and offstage, crossover gospel artists employed: 1) popular music and dance forms; 2) contemporary fashion and status symbols; 3) overt references to popular culture; 4) association with mainstream artists; and 5) conspicuous (hetero)sexuality. Gospel artists drew from the *popular music and dance forms* of the day—especially R&B and hip hop. Artists infused their songs with the latest slang or other *black pop culture references* to show immersion in, rather than the expected abstinence from, contemporary society.

Donning *contemporary fashion* not only signaled that the gospel artist was in step with the latest trends, but also demonstrated that she saw herself as aesthetically viable and competitive in the mainstream marketplace. While the artist invited the gaze of unchurched consumers through fashion, s*tatus symbols* such as expensive hair extensions, apparel, cars, and homes, credentialed the artist in a capitalist society that highly valued accrual of money and materials. Gospel artists stood to increase their social capital and exposure, through *association with mainstream artists*. Finally, as sex and sexuality were emphasized in American society through television, movies, social media, and music, gospel artists also wanted to display their sexuality, rather than suppress it as was historically expected of sacred music singers. Conspicuous display of sexuality was another way to attract the attention of mainstream consumers.

While artists of any genre seeking to crossover to the mainstream music may engage in the performance of accessibility, this chapter will show how black female gospel artists in the platinum age utilized this strategy to cross over to black mainstream markets. Gospel duo Mary

Mary exhibited the acme of this type of accessible performance in the platinum age. The two sisters were able to reach remarkable heights of celebrity and sales success by focusing their attention on black mainstream consumers.

Historiography

Scholarly literature on gospel music discuss gospel as not only the sacred music of African American churches, but also an industry. Gospel music scholars Anthony Heilbut and Deborah Smith Pollard stand out for their attentiveness to gender and sexuality in the industry.[212] In the chapter "Muscle T-shirts, Tight Jeans, and Cleavage: (W)rapping the Gospel for a New Generation," of her book *When the Church Becomes Your Party* (2008) Pollard describes the changes in attire that have taken place during the last twenty-five years for both male and female contemporary gospel artists. Pollard also describes the systematic sexual repression imposed by what Pollard identifies as "the Church," contemporary artists negotiate as they express sexuality.[213] Alisha Lola Jones devotes her dissertation to expression of gender and sexuality among male gospel artists.[214]

While Alisha Jones focuses on the work of male gospel artists, musicologist Tammy Kernodle's article "Work the Works: The Role of African American Women in the Development of Contemporary Gospel" details the contributions of key female contemporary gospel artists

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[212] Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*.

[213] Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*, 82.

[214] Alisha Lola Jones, "'We Are a Peculiar People': Meaning, Masculinity, and Competence in Gendered Gospel Performance" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2015).

such as Danniebelle Hall, Tremaine Hawkins, Mattie Moss Clark, the Clark Sisters, Vickie Winans, and Yolanda Adams.[215] Furthermore, some gospel artists have penned their own biographies. Gospel legend Mahalia Jackson provides her own autobiography in *Movin' On Up* (1966). Additionally, Laurraine Goreau chronicles Jackson's life and times in *Just Mahalia, Baby* (1975).[216] Gospel artist CeCe Winans gives voice to her own story of service in the gospel music industry.[217] Besides Jerma Jackson's discussion of the "shift in gender relations" in black communities of the 1920s and 1930s, practically no attention to theories of gender and sexuality are applied to these biographies and histories.[218] This chapter begins to address how female gospel artists understand their deliberate expressions of gender and sexuality to be tools for evangelism. This chapter focuses on gospel duo Mary Mary as a case study of platinum-age gospel artists' performances for mainstream consumption.

Mary Mary's Rise to Platinum Artistry and Performance of Accessibility in "God in Me"

Erica Campbell (b. Erica Monique Atkins, April 29, 1972) and Tina Campbell (b. Trecina Evette Atkins, May 1, 1974) were both born in Lynwood, CA and Inglewood, CA, respectively, to Eddie and Thomasina "Honey" Atkins Jr. Growing up in Inglewood, the sisters were members

[215] Tammy L. Kernodle, "Work the Works: The Role of African American Women in the Development of Contemporary Gospel," in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, ed. James Abbington, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2014), 728–45.

[216] Mahalia Jackson and Evan McLeod Wylie, *Movin' On Up* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. Publishers, 1966); Laurraine Goreau, *Just Mahalia, Baby* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975).

[217] Winans and Weems, *On a Positive Note*.

[218] Jackson, *Singing in My Soul*, 32.

of Evangelistic Church of God in Christ, pastored by their uncle Charles Edward Lollis.[219] Erica and Tina Campbell are the fourth and fifth of nine children to Eddie and Thomasina Atkins Fr., and the sisters describe themselves as having grown up poor in Inglewood.[220] Coincidentally, both sisters married men with the last name "Campbell." Erica's husband Warryn Campbell is Mary Mary's primary producer. He is a mainstream music producer who has written or produced for celebrity hip hop and R&B artists such as Kanye West and Brandy, among many others. Tina is married to Teddy Campbell (Glendon Theodore Campbell, Sr.), former drummer for late-night talk show *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Teddy and Warryn Campbell are also members of the all-male traditional gospel group The Soul Seekers.

Erica and Tina's career as a gospel duo skyrocketed in the late 1990s. They were going to record the song "Shackles" for the *Prince of Egypt* soundtrack when Warryn advised them to save it for their own recording project. His advice proved prescient. "Shackles" was a hit in mainstream markets, reaching #28 on Billboard's Hot 100 in 2000. The platinum-certified success of the accompanying album *Thankful* secured their place as a headlining contemporary gospel act.

Mary Mary epitomized the accessible performance style that contemporary crossover gospel groups and soloists adopted wholesale in the platinum age (and today). The Marys' emphasis on accessibility is especially apparent in their song "God in Me." Mary Mary's single "God in Me" was released in 2008, and peaked at #5 on the R&B Hip Hop Charts, #1 on Gospel

[219] Erica Campbell, Tina Campell, and Sheeri Mitchell, *Transparent* (Chicago, IL: TRUEink Publishing, 2003), 4,7,13.

[220] Ibid., 6, 12.

and Dance/Club Play Charts, and #68 on the Hot One Hundred. One can see accessible performance at work in the accompanying album's packaging, and especially in the "God in Me" video.[221]

The song has many of the same stylistic elements of the popular hip hop soul tune "Buy U A Drank" by Hip hop and R&B artist T-Pain, which was topping the charts in 2007. [222] "Buy U A Drank" was T-Pain's ode to couples who found each other in the club. The song is comprised of the standard black hip hop soul elements of that time. Musically, there is very little range in the melodic line, making the melody very easy to sing. The music video is set in a club, where T-Pain sings of his ability to spend a lot money on the person he is interested in, as he offers to buy his romantic interest a drink.

As gospel artists target markets outside of the black, evangelical church-attending crowd, they have striven to make themselves appealing to as many market groups as possible—starting with the black mainstream. Given the current global popularity and influence of hip hop, it is not surprising that a hip hop aesthetic—with regards to music, fashion, and lifestyle—is pervasive among contemporary gospel artists. Even some of the older, traditional artists have also yielded to the hip hop aesthetic. For example, traditional gospel living legend Shirley Caesar raps on her song "I Know the Truth" (2005). In an appearance on the television show *The Gospel of Music*

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[221] MARYMARYVEVO, "Mary Mary - God in Me," 2009, accessed February 29, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agxi8cei9h8.

[222] TPainVEVO, "T-Pain - Buy U A Drank (Shawty Snappin') Ft. Yung Joc," 2009, accessed February 29, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBrRBZy8OTs. By 2008, producer-artists such as Lil Jon and T Pain, and singer Chris Brown had helped make Crunk music an established subgenre of hip hop music. Crunk music was a type of hip hop dance music. "God in Me" more aptly fits the black popular music style "hip hop soul" rather than Crunk music.

with Jeff Majors, Caesar sings with contemporary gospel artist Tonéx, who raps about the fact that Caesar is a traditional gospel artist with a hip hop track. Then Pastor Caesar begins to rap herself:[223]

> Talk about me just as much as you please,
> But the more that you talk,
> I'm gonna sell cds.
>
> Everybody's tripping on this track,
> 'Cause it's so groundbreaking,
> That we're taking church back to the streets.
>
> Stomp on the devil,
> Take ya to another level,
> If the dust starts flyin',
> Then they pass church fans.
>
> You telling lies,
> But I know the truth,
> We're off to the Grammys
> Clap with me.

Channeling the braggadocio common to rap music, Ceasar states that she is going to make a lot of record sales and go the Grammys—presumably as a nominee for the coveted award.

While the Marys did not set their video in a club, perhaps they chose the next best thing—a fashion show, where one could still expect to hear dance music and see the latest fashion. The video for "God in Me" is staged as a fashion show hosted by Warryn Campbell's MyBlock Record label and somehow curated or championed by the two Marys. The thumping

[223] MinstrelProphet, "Shirley Caesar Sings I KNOW THE TRUTH (Live with Tonex)," *YouTube.com*, accessed May 6, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OP_Ie9w7fw.

bass-line of "God in Me" creates an infectious, if not seductive, urban dance groove upon which gospel lyrics are layered.[224] It is clear that this music was made to be played in the club.

The sisters sing in the second person, praising someone for displaying fabulous fashion and having access to money, because all of that reflects God's presence in the person's life. In "Buy U A Drank," T-Pain sought to convince a young woman that he was worthy of her time by enumerating his monetary and material assets ("money in the bank" and "grey Cadillac") and his ability to afford expensive drinks (as Yung Joc stated he would buy a half dozen shots at $150 each). In "God in Me" Mary Mary wants to convince the listener that God is benevolent by tallying the material blessings of the song's protagonist; she can "write checks with a whole lot of zeros," and also has a nice car and fashionable clothes. The "God in Me" lyrics and video clearly demonstrate many of the ways in which crossover gospel artists give attention to self-presentation for accessibility to mainstream audiences.

Association with Mainstream Artists

In the "God in Me" fashion show, audience members include hip hop icon Kanye West, hip hop celebrity Derek Watkins, also known as Fonzworth Bentley, and rapper/singer CeeLo Green of Goodie Mob and Narls Barkley. These hip hop trendsetters are taking fashion cues from the gospel artists. The video is three minutes and eleven seconds of hip hop and haute couture, reminiscent of the BET network's show *Rip the Runway*. One could forget that one is watching a gospel video at all, if it were not for Mary Mary advising that their fashionability and wealth are manifestations of God's blessings as a result of exercising personal piety.

[224] The song revolves around 2 chords: Db – Eb6. More text about the musical arrangement to be added.

Gospel artists associate themselves with popular artists for credibility; connection with popular artists provides a kind of street-cred with mainstream consumers. It shows that gospel artists are competitive with secular artists in terms of the entertainment that they can provide. Connections are made visible through musical collaborations, especially on awards shows, and through cameos in videos.

In another example of association with mainstream artists and references to popular culture, Erica Campbell sings the incredibly catchy trap gospel song "I Luh God," in which "luh" is the slang form of the word *love* in contemporary hip hop.[225] This single is another multifaceted performance of accessibility. "I Luh God" has the requisite instrumental elements of trap music, a particular (currently very popular) subgenre of hiphop music. The trap sound includes the rapid-fire hits on the hi-hat, ratch claps, and booming 808 kick.[226] Erica renders the tune alongside famed producer LaShawn "The Big Shizz" Daniels, who has written and/or produced for P. Diddy, Destiny's Child, Whitney Houston, Lady Gaga, and Michael Jackson, among many others. In the video, Erica Campbell sports various looks as she postures and raps with her posse of family members dancing in the background.

The first verse of "I Luh God" states:

> I don't think that I could live no other way
> Truth be told, I'm living how I wanna, aye
> Now, I done seen some blessings in the modern day
> The Lord I serve, He give them to me everyday

[225] She embodies the requisite *rachetismo*—or ostentatious rachetness with her bouffant curls, skintight pants, and gaudy fashion jewelry in the "I Luh God" video..

[226] "Ratch claps" ["ratch" likely being a derivative of the slang word "ratchet"] is a term used in the music industry denoting clapping sounds layered in trap compositions. Definition of the trap sound provided by musician/producer Delbert "DMack" Mack Jr. in conversations June 22-23, 2015. Mack Jr., interview.

I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven
See I done been forgiven, now I'm living
And when I say I love, I mean it
'Cause none of this means nothing if He comes and I miss Him, shorty

I luh God
You don't luh God?
What's wrong with chu?

Overt References to Popular Culture

The "God in Me" lyrics are sprinkled with slang terms like "whip" and "tight," rather than overt scriptural references. The target for this music is the unchurched (or the churched who get down like the unchurched). To have a "tight whip" or nice vehicle, and a nice "crib" or home, would certainly legitimate the heroine of this song as a "cool" person integrated into contemporary pop culture. Setting the video as a fashion show and red carpet event with many celebrity guests also unambiguously draws from pop culture.

The lyrics prioritize a vernacular of hip hop culture in much the same way that historian Evelyn Higginbotham explains that black gospel singers and preachers used working-class vernacular in the religious records of the 1920s and 1930s. In her article, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture," Evelyn Higginbotham refers to some religious cultural expressions found in the race records of the 1920s and 1930s as "vernacular discourses of religion."[227] Higginbotham made clear that religious expression of the working-class could be found in the "vernacular discourses of religion," or everyday discourses related to the life and experiences of the working class as

[227] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture: Black Religion and Race Records in the 1920s and 1930s," in *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 979.

captured on race records in sermons and gospel blues.[228] Higginbotham was offering a corrective to scholarship of African American culture and religion that too often: 1) equated black church culture with black middle class religious expression; and 2) correlated black working-class culture with the blues music culture opposed to any religious culture. Just as the artists on race records of the 1920s and 1930s used the quotidian language of the black working class, Mary Mary used the vernacular of hip-hop culture—the de facto language of the black working class in the new millennium.

Contemporary Fashion and Status Symbols

Gospel artists seek to be "fly" according to latest fashion trends in R&B and hip hop. Artists argue that they cannot expect to grab the attention of unchurched listeners if they do not look fashionable. In other words, one cannot be accessible unless one is fashionable. Consequently, a niche industry for styling gospel artists has boomed in the last 15 years as gospel artists have become increasingly more fashion conscious. There are now stylists and clothing designers who have built or greatly propelled their careers by primarily dressing gospel artists. Among the most famous gospel stylists are Goo-Goo Atkins (sister of Erica and Tina Campbell) and J. Bolin.[229] This trendiness extends to hair as well. Erica has her own line of hair extensions and wigs; contemporary gospel artist Lexi also sells hair extensions.

[228] Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture," 1997, 158.

[229] Algernon (@siralgernon) may also be another designer with a significant gospel clientele.

While artists use fashion and status symbols to attract consumers, the status symbols serve to bolster the image of fashionability, rather than merely demonstrating wealth for contemporary gospel artists. In her article "Rags to Riches: Religion, Media, and the Performance of Wealth in a Neoliberal age" Marla Frederick argues that prosperity preachers are engaged in the performance of wealth. Frederick asserts that the evangelists present their respective identities through 1) personal style; 2) narratives of blessing; and 3) conservative political discourses. The trailer for the first season of the reality show *Preachers of L.A.* demonstrates performance of wealth clearly.[230] *Preachers of L.A.* was a reality show airing on the *Oxygen* television network during 2013 and 2014, which explores the life of four black preachers (and one white preacher) and showed that "preachers are human" too.[231] After about a minute of sound bites from each of the four preachers, the trailer cuts to a shot of a spinning car tire, with a shiny and ostensibly expensive rim. Then, Pastor Ron Gibson, appears with a fleet of cars, including a five-second close-up of the Bentley logo for one of the them. Bentley automobiles are the stuff of rap lyrics for their association with wealth. Later, a montage displays Bishop Clarence McClendon getting suited at a tailor and golfing. A wide-screen shot of his palatial home and expensive car grace the screen before he says, "The Bible says that, 'I wish above all things that you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.' I believe that."

[230] Preachers Of LA, "Preachers of L.A.: Premieres October 9," accessed January 24, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ml8bQDnnkKk.

[231] *Preachers of LA* (Oxygen, 2013). In an interview, Pastor Noel Jones, one of the stars of *Preachers of L.A.* explicitly states that he wants to show that preachers are human just like everyone else, and should not be placed on a pedestal. JHMS1390, "JHMS: Bishop Noel Jones Talks Preachers of LA and Lisa Raye - YouTube," accessed February 7, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F88UrXFeZeo.

Immediately afterward, Bishop Ron Gibson states, “P. Diddy, Jay-Z—they’re not the only ones who should be driving Ferraris and living in large houses.” (P. Diddy and Jay-Z are both black American hip hop moguls.) Pastor Jay Haizlip follows to say, “The Bible says that, ‘Those who sow among us should reap from us. And, that is implying that the preacher should be taken care of.”

Marla Frederick’s analysis of black televangelists as performers of wealth could be applied to gospel artists, as gospel artists’ consumer base is partially comprised of the same people who fill these preachers’ churches. Contemporary gospel music, and particularly the gospel music of the last twenty-five years has seen its fair share of the performance of wealth. Yet, I argue that gospel artists, unlike prosperity pastors and preachers, are more concerned with the performance of accessibility than with the performance of wealth. Through their attire, musical choices, and abandonment of traditional sacred/secular binaries, gospel artists are not simply demonstrating wealth, but instead are exhibiting fashionability in order to position their music and ministry for appeal beyond traditional black, evangelical, church-attending audiences.

The Marys certainly imply wealth with their song “God in Me.” The second verse particularly espouses what could be considered a prosperity gospel. Mary Mary states:

> You see her style. You think she nice
> You look at her whip. You say the whip tight
> You look at her crib. You thinkin’ she paid
> You look at her life. You think she’s got it made
> But everything she got, the girl’s been given
> She calls it a blessing, but you call it living
> When it comes to money, she can be a hero
> She writes them checks with a whole lot of zeros

While these lyrics arguably suggest subscription to the prosperity gospel, I suggest that a performance of accessibility trumps the performance of wealth in this song. This verse is a sonic representation of "swag" or hipness associated with one's fashion and comportment.

There is a lacuna of scholarship theorizing "swag" as used in African American parlance and culture.[232] The black vernacular use of "swag" is a departure from the word's common usage in American English. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the noun *swag* has several meanings. It can mean drapes, loot, or stolen goods.[233] Even as late as the 1998, Michelle Burford was describing how to decorate a room on a budget using "stylish swags or café curtains," in *Essence* magazine.[234] Also, by the late 1990s, *swag* was used colloquially to denote "promotional goods."[235] Yet, by the early 2000s, a new definition of *swag* had made its way into the mainstream pop-culture lexicon by way of hip hop culture. This new definition signaled a cool-factor. *Swag* may be a shortened version of the word *swagger*, meaning bravado especially demonstrated in one's demeanor and walk. While *swagger* has historically denoted the fine

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[232] Texts on performance theory and gender referenced, and which do not discuss "swag" include: bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Mark Anthony Neal, *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013); Ashton T. Crawley, "'Let's Get It On!' performance Theory and Black Pentecostalism," *Black Theology* 6 (2008): 308–29; Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez, eds., *Black Performance Theory* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2014).

[233] "Swag | Definition of Swag by Merriam-Webster," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed June 12, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/swag.

[234] Michelle Burford, "Living Room 911," *Essence*, July 1998, 114.

[235] Dictionary.reference.com states: "Colloquial sense of 'promotional material' (from recording companies, etc.) was in use by 2001." "Swag | Define Swag at Dictionary.com," accessed June 12, 2015, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/swag?s=t.Yet, I have found a 1999 *New York Times* article that uses *swag* in this exact sense. Ty Burr, "A Few Words in Defense of Swag," *New York Times*, May 2, 1999.

masculine quality of an attractive man—especially a *male* actor, rapper, or other entertainer, hip-hop *swag* can be displayed by a person of any gender. As *swag* made its way into mainstream vocabulary, it picked up additional meanings. By 2003, swag was not just the cool way one carried himself, but cool paraphernalia—including clothes, jewelry, furniture, or even gift bags at awards shows.[236]

Gospel artists use the word "swag" in performative declarations of fashionability and hipness. Kierra Sheard, the contemporary gospel artist also singing on the "God in Me" track, provides a good an example of this phenomenon. Sheard boldly declares her swag in the introductory episode of her family's reality show *The Sheards*, when she says: "I got a *lot* of swag for a church girl. I think my swag is on a *million*" (emphasis hers).[237] Kierra Sheard is a daughter of the gospel music dynasty established by her maternal grandmother Mattie Moss Clark and crystallized by Kierra's own mother and aunts who make up The Clark Sisters. Kierra Sheard's father is a prominent bishop in the Church of God In Christ, and her brother is a producer and seasoned gospel musician. Kierra is a masterful gospel singer in her own right; she catapulted to childhood stardom in the gospel world when she sang "The Will of God" with her mother Karen Clark-Sheard for the *Finally Karen* CD (1997).[238] Despite all of the inherited clout

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[236] Swag is furniture for a college dorm room; see "College Swag," *Ebony*, September 2014. Gifts at fashion shows, especially gift bags of fragrances or pillows, are described as swag; see Rachel Felder et al., "Oh, Goody!," *People*, October 6, 2003. Clooney's "Oscar gift bag" is described as a "swag bag" in the title of the article; see Olivia Abel et al., "Buy Clooney's Oscar Swag Bag!," *People*, April 3, 2006.

[237] "The Sheards: Recaps: Bold Right Life," *BET.com*, 2013, accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.bet.com/video/the-sheards/season-1/recaps/episode-101-recap.html.

[238] "'The Will of God'--Karen Clark-Sheard Feat. Kierra Sheard," accessed May 18, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJxMk4nK2MA.

that Kierra Sheard has a gospel artist, she chooses to defend her fluency in contemporary black culture with the pronouncement of her high swag quotient. Stating that she has a lot of swag "for a church girl" makes clear that she is compensating for the stereotype that people in the church—and especially the Pentecostal church—are disconnected from the trends of popular culture. Incidentally, Sheard's statement also evokes Kanye West's verse on rapper T.I.'s "Swagga Like Us" in which West declares:

> Mr. West is in the buildin'.
> Swagger on a hundred thousand trillion.[239]

Conspicuous (Hetero)sexuality

Closely connected to fashionability is a kind of conspicuous display of sexuality. Choosing apparel that draws attention to one's physical frame is one of the ways in which gospel artists endeavor to display sex appeal. The black church has long been as an institution that upholds the traditional conceptions of heterosexual marriage and family even as musicians in black churches have been known or rumored to transgress traditional boundaries of heteronormative sexuality and gender expression. Gospel artists now place great emphasis on their ability to be attractive to the opposite sex, and to model a life that is both spiritual and filled with heteronormative romance. Tina and Erica Campbell unabashedly discuss sex and sexuality

[239] "Swagga Like Us," T.I., *Paper Trail*, CD, 2008. Chamillionare, a highly successful independent rapper, released a track called "Swagga Like Koop" in which he states, "Somebody needs to give me a solid definition of what swag is." He goes on to say that *swag* is word used by rappers when they know they cannot rap. "Swagga Like Koop," Chamillionaire, *Mixtape Messiah 5*, CD (Chamillitary Records, 2008). Both aforementioned songs sample the song "Paper Plains" by artist M.I.A. "Paper Planes," M.I.A., *Kala (Bonus Track Version)*, MP3 (XL Recordings Ltd, 2007).

in interviews and on their reality TV show. Erica is moving forward with her perceived call `to lead the church in frank discussions about sex.

While the gospel industry has taken a bold step in the direction of open and even ostentatious displays of heterosexuality, homosexuality remains taboo to a large extent. There are many artists whom industry insiders know are homosexual, but who never make such verbal declarations on the gospel stage themselves. There are some exceptions to this unwritten rule. Gospel artist Donnie McClurkin openly shared that he had been in sexual relationships with men; he usually coupled this disclosure with a denunciation of homosexuality.[240] Gospel artist Tonéx (also known as B. Slade) came out as gay during an interview with gospel artist and television show host Lexi.[241] McClurkin's denunciations seem to have allowed him to escape any career-stifling consequences in gospel. On the other hand, Tonéx's bold declaration (2009) led to ostracism from gospel stages.[242] In 2014, Tonéx reemerged in the gospel world as a producer for Jacky Clark Chisolm.[243]

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[240] Donnie McClurkin, *Eternal Victim/Eternal Victor* (Pneuma Life Publishing, 2001), 33–34.

[241] lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 1," *YouTube.com*, September 10, 2009, accessed April 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=970nMJ_nhIg; lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 2," *YouTube.com*, September 11, 2009, accessed April 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yg5EhnbZqkA; lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 3," *YouTube.com*, September 11, 2009, accessed April 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMbc1pl92Sk.

[242] Sanneh, "Profiles: Revelations."

[243] "EXCLUSIVE FIRST LISTEN: JACKY CLARK-CHISHOLM 'MY SEASON,'" *Da Gospel Truth*, March 20, 2014, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.dagospeltruth.com/exclusive-first-listen-jacky-clark-chisholm-my-season/; DonnieMcClurkinShow, "Jacky Clark-Chisholm Interview - My Season - YouTube," *YouTube.com*, April 28, 2014, accessed April 25, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5CyDbdi0Uc; "Jacky Clark Chisolm - My Season - YouTube," accessed April 25, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_7JJnWsVFQ.

Sexy for Jesus

The phrase *sexy for Jesus* is a term that gospel artists use to describe themselves or each other. The first time I heard the term used by a gospel artist was on a very short-lived television show entitled *106 and Gospel* (2009) when the female cohost Angel Taylor, from the contemporary gospel group Tri-ni-tee 5:7, referred to herself as sexy for Jesus. Contemporary gospel singer-songwriter Bebe Winans, stated to an interviewer for the online news outlet *The Grio*, "I can't help it that I'm sexy for Jesus."[244] Anthony Heilbut described traditional gospel artists as having an "innocent" sexuality.[245] Their physicality, conviction, and charisma resulted in a seemingly unintentional sex appeal. The tide has now turned. Gospel artists are meticulous about presenting themselves as sexually attractive; this is part of a larger enterprise of assimilating with contemporary heteronormative culture. There are some exceptions to this unwritten rule. Gospel artist Donnie McClurkin openly shared that he had been in relationships with other men; he usually coupled this disclosure with his denunciation of homosexuality. Gospel artist Tonéx (also known as B. Slade) came out as gay during an interview with gospel artist and television show host Lexi.

[244] Chris Witherspoon, "Winans Brothers Discuss Being 'Sexy for Jesus,'" *TheGrio.com*, September 2, 2014, accessed November 15, 2015, http://thegrio.com/2014/09/02/winans-brothers-discuss-being-sexy-for-jesus/.

[245] Heilbut states, "Now gospel is, in some ways, a sexual music. Its performers sing with their bodies and move with a thrilling grace and physical abandonment. This sexuality is taken for granted, and is, I think, largely innocent." Anthony Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times*, 6th Limelight ed., 25th anniversary ed. (New York; Milwaukee, Wis.: Limelight Editions; Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2002), 76.

The sexy-for-Jesus intentionality is all about presenting oneself as appealing to those who are not part of church culture. *Ultimately, to be sexy for Jesus is to bring attention to one's own sexualized body for the purpose of evangelizing*. This is done in a myriad of ways. For women, body-conscious clothing does this self-sexualizing work. Loose robes have been traded in for body-con, or body-contouring dresses, as well as leggings, and jeggings. Fitted faux-leather is often employed to accentuate bustlines. Erica Campbell wears a formfitting outfit in the promotional material for her first solo project. She jettisons the image of sexual innocence for a more sensual self-representation (Figure 3.1).

Erica Campbell received flak on social media for promoting her first solo single in a form-fitting white dress that was styled by celebrity stylist J. Bolin.[246] In response, she doubled-down on her declaration of her God-given sex-appeal.

[246] While Erica Campbell herself refers to the outfit as the "white dress," stylist J. Bolin makes clear that this was, in fact, a skirt and shirt. See his December 9, 2013 Instagram posts of the photo of Erica Campbell, in which he names' the skirt's designer as "@jasminebstubbs" or @A_B_Christine" (apparently two different handles referring to the same person. J. Bolin, "Fashion Followers Here Is the Brilliant Designer for This Skirt!! Follow Her @A_B_Christine," Instagram, *@stylistjbolin*, (December 9, 2013, accessed April 22, 2017). Additionally, fashion blogger Bella Styles references Bolin's Instagram account when clarifying that this was a skirt and shirt, rather than a dress. Styles, Bella, "Grab Her Style: 'Erica Campbell's White Turtleneck Dress and Shoes,'" *"Trendy Curves"™ by Bella Styles*, December 10, 2013, accessed April 23, 2017, https://bellastyles.com/2013/12/10/grab-her-style-erica-campbells-white-turtleneck-dress-and-shoes/.



Figure 3.1 Promotional Material for Erica Campbell's song "Help" (2014)

> But I dare not feel uncomfortable with my sexuality. God created sex and sexuality. I do not believe that it has to be negative. From a Christian perspective, take ownership of how God made you and you can still be beautiful and strong and sexy, and sexy is not a bad word.[247]

This sexy-for-Jesus phenomenon reflects a reorientation of gospel music toward religious discourse not about freedom from systems of socio-economic or socio-political oppression, but rather movement toward sexual liberation—albeit within the confines of heteronormative marriage. Now, Erica Campbell has used the white dress incident as a springboard for

[247] "Erica Campbell on Being Healthy, Sexy and Spiritually Well," *Essence.com*, accessed May 8, 2015, http://www.essence.com/2014/04/10/erica-campbell-being-healthy-sexy-and-spiritually-well.

championing the celebration of and education about heterosexuality in black churches through her "More than Pretty" campaign.

Some industry executives may want to argue that the social media backlash Erica Campbell received shows that the *churchgoing* gospel music consumers are still very conservative. Moreover, they would say that Mary Mary and their counterparts represent outliers in contemporary gospel rather than the new normal. I argue instead, that the artists' unfettered access to prominent church platforms represents a significant shift in black gospel music history, even if there are many churchgoers and pastors of smaller churches who have not made the theological moves that these prominent church pastors have made.[248] Furthermore, while most gospel artists will not reach the financial success that Mary Mary has attained, the group has created a model for contemporary gospel artistry that many if not most female artists are consciously or unconsciously following.

Sexuality On and Off Stage

Many platinum-age gospel artists now place great emphasis on their ability to be sexy by popular culture's standards and to have a thriving romantic life. Off stage, for example, the Marys and their contemporary gospel colleagues make bold declarations of sexiness such as "my swag is on a million," (Kierra "KiKi" Sheard) or "I can't help it that I'm sexy for Jesus" (BeBe Winans).[249]

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[248] See chapter 2 for more on how prominent church pastors have recalibrated piety to allow for more conspicuous displays of sexuality in churches.

[249] "The Sheards: Recaps: Bold Right Life"; Witherspoon, "Winans Brothers Discuss Being 'Sexy for Jesus.'"

The Marys are constantly declaring their sexuality. During the first two seasons of their reality show, they highlighted their sense of style and their hot and happening sex lives with their respective husbands. The desire to be sexy is so evident that even a self-proclaimed "heathen" can see it. Michael Arceneaux synopsized his perception of the Mary Mary's aspirations as follows:

> Meanwhile, Erica and Tina were at odds over Tina's commitment to the group and Erica's yearning for success as a solo artist. Erica is itching to be the gospel equivalent of Beyoncé whereas Tina's attitude has been more or less like one of the children left behind destiny, content with being where she is. Based on the preview of the new season, Tina is going solo, so here's hoping she can be their Mary J. Blige. Lord knows she's got some real struggle to sing about.[250]

Pushing past Arceneaux's pejorative comparison of Tina Campbell to every member of pop/R&B girl group Destiny's Child besides Beyoncé, his statement about Erica Campbell is noteworthy. Beyoncé is known for her sensuality as much if not more than for her singing; she is a Millennial sex-symbol. In fact, religion and cultural studies scholar Shayne Lee argues vehemently that Beyoncé is not just a sex-symbol, but an "erotic revolutionary.[251] In his book *Erotic Revolutionaries,* Lee writes at length about the sexual progressiveness of televangelist turned singer Juanita Bynum. He could have just as easily written about the two singing Marys, given their frank discussions about sex on their reality show and in interviews. There was the episode in which a very pregnant Erica insisted on taking her sisters to a pole-dancing work-out

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[250] Michael Arceneaux, "A Heathen's Love for Mary Mary - Entertainment & Culture - EBONY," *Ebony.com*, March 6, 2015, accessed November 15, 2015, http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/a-heathens-love-for-mary-mary-403#axzz3ZWG6gYWD.

[251] Shayne Lee, *Erotic Revolutionaries: Black Women, Sexuality, and Popular Culture* (Lanham, Md.: Hamilton Books, 2010), 147.

class. There was the bachelorette party with topless waiters.[252] There was Tina's dramaturgical kisses with Teddy and flippant statement that the children see that kind of passion between her and Teddy all the time.[253]

The sisters' comments on a hip hop radio show hosted by Renada Romain on SiriusXM satellite radio reveal an openness about sexuality that previous generations of gospel artists just did not display on the national stage. The narratives that female gospel artists provide are similar to what Anthropologist Marla Frederick refers to as a "gospel of sexual redemption."[254] Instead of narrative deliverance from a situation of sexual abuse or immorality, however, their narratives are more likely to be about their ability to fully embrace their God-given gift of sexuality without guilt or shame, and their desire for all to have that liberty, within the confines of heterosexual marriage. Erica's frankness on more than one occasion surprises the DJ.

> DJ Renada Romain (RR): How do you protect your marriage?
>
> Erica Campbell (EC): You make sure that you guys (the husband and wife) are solid. You make sure that you blow his mind so much and so well.
>
> RR: Ooh, is that Erica Campbell saying that?
>
> EC: Absolutely. Fourteen years happily married. And it's ordained by God. It's beautiful. You not only make a sexual connection, you make a heart connection and a mental connection. I know him. He knows me.
>
> And you think that they [husbands] want a freak on a pole. They want validation. They want love. They want acceptance. They want to know that their secrets are safe with you, that they can be vulnerable with you.

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[252] "Bachelorette Party," *Mary Mary* (WeTV, December 13, 2012).

[253] "Ain't That a Mitch," *Mary Mary* (WeTV, 2016).

[254] Marla Frederick, *Colored Television: American Religion Gone Global* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 87.

> Tina Campbell (TC): And the freak on the pole. They want the freak on the pole, now. Don't miss it. But guess what, I ain't gon' lie. I was the freak on the pole.
>
> RR: You've been twerking for [your husband] Teddy?
>
> TC: Baby, I'm a happily married woman.
>
> EC: But it has to be the other stuff.
>
> TC: It has to be the other stuff.[255]

Again, we see these artists presenting themselves as accessible to the masses through their narratives of sexual liberty. This certainly represents what Frederick describes as the "shift in Protestant discourse around sexuality from respectability and sinless perfection to an emphasis on "real," transparent testimonies."[256] Certainly, as Frederick points out, mainstream culture's preoccupation with sex has influenced gospel artists' discussion of sex. At the same time, gospel artists do not go as far as the televangelists; they never want to be seen as "preachy" or judgemental. As a result, these female artists tend to speak about their position on LGBTQIA issues only when forced to, at which time they confess adherence to heteronormativity.

In any case, they want to show that they have enough swag to go on a hip-hop radio station and talk about sex, just like any mainstream artist. Nothing is more quotidian in contemporary culture than sex-talk in the context of hip-hop music, and the Marys are accessible in that space. They love sex and recognize its importance just as any other married heterosexual woman should.

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[255] RenadaRomainTV, "Tina & Erica Campbell of Mary Mary Says 'Hoes Got It Wrong!' | YouTube," *YouTube.com*, accessed May 9, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVSJx8wjclQ.

[256] Frederick, *Colored Television*, 112.

Clara Ward & the Clara Ward Singers' Churchy Precedent

Did traditional gospel artists have sex appeal? Perhaps a hint of what Heilbut understood to be "innocent" sexuality is evident as Clara Ward and the Clara Ward Singers sing "Them Bones" on the *Playboy After Dark* show in 1968.[257] *Playboy After Dark* was an American television show that ran for two seasons. While the Playboy franchise began as an adult magazine and developed into an adult entertainment conglomerate, this television show was not a source of "adult" entertainment. Instead, the show featured various artists at a party hosted by *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner. In this instance, we see gospel artists taking the gospel message to a space outside of the church, or as gospel music scholar and disc jockey Deborah Smith Pollard says, "gospel music was being "viewed as a vital expression of black culture, even when detached from the formal worship service."[258] In all, the Ward Singers' rendition is decidedly churchy rather than sexual.

In this particular *Playboy After Dark* episode, a relatively young Hugh Hefner, invites Clara Ward and her music-making cohort to sing, commenting that their gospel music is "just what [his] party needs." Clara Ward leaves the bar where she had been conversing with Hefner, and as she walks toward the microphones, the wings of her lime green mumu fly. The other singers have donned long shiny golden gowns. They all have extravagant wigs, bedazzled shoes, and costume jewelry. They are glamorous, maybe a tad bit gaudy; but they are not overtly

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[257] Howie Pyro, "Clara Ward Singers at the Playboy Mansion!," accessed December 3, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yF62m3THDw. The exact air date of this show is unknown, but the YouTube webpage states that the episode dates to 1968. See earlier footnote concerning Heilbut's description of traditional gospel artists as having an "innocent," sexuality. Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*, 76.

[258] Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*, 15.

provocative in their attire—not even in the context of 1968 American fashion. After a while, Malvilyn Statham animates her entire body as she delivers the lead vocals. She sings about bodies resurrecting, referencing the prophet Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, in which the prophet sees bodies reconstituting, bone by bone (Ezekiel 37:1-14). She flails her arms wildly and thrusts her pelvis vigorously to embody the lyrics.

During the golden age, gospel acts like the Clara Ward singers took great care in their representation. They were known for highly coiffed hair, showy jewelry, and spectacular gowns. Yet, by the standards of the day, their attire and sound were still quite conservative, and coded religious, as was evidenced in the aforementioned episode of *Playboy After Dark*. Their impassioned, animated call-and-response singing coupled with hand clapping and tambourine playing all signaled that they were making "church music." It's hard to be more "in the world" than at a *Playboy* party, and yet even there, the Ward Singers showed that they were not *"of the world*" by holding to their conservative attire, and singing what would be considered "church songs" or songs that overtly give praise to God, foretell apocalypse, or lyrically recount some biblical text. Malvilyn Statham's soloing was spectacular, and extremely physical. But any sexual suggestiveness was mitigated by attire, the tambourine playing, and hand clapping, which signified church in the midst of a Playboy party. Clara Ward on *Playboy After Dark* shows that while gospel artists were intentional about their appearances before the platinum age, the employment of sexuality for evangelization is new to the platinum age of gospel.

Rosetta Tharpe

Beyond Clara Ward, pioneering gospel artist Rosetta Tharpe is often cited as a sexual revolutionary. Yet, I argue that Tharpe did not set a new standard for the integration of popular

and gospel music. Instead, she spent much of her life at odds with the church community to which she was connected, and her musical efforts ultimately did not stave off poverty for her. In fact, Gayle Wald, scholar of literature and popular music culture, argues in her biography of Rosetta Tharpe:

> Rosetta's courage to follow her artistic convictions and pursue her ambitions set her apart from popular musicians on both sides of the sacred/secular divide. In the racially segregated rural and small-town communities where most black people lived before World War II, churches were defining institutions and ambitious young musicians confronted the parting of paths between the church and the world as crucial career turning points. Those who pursued the secular [or popular music] path from Muddy Waters and T-Bone Walker to Dinah Washington and Sam Cooke, inevitably paid a price for their choices in the reproach of the very communities that had nurtured and applauded their talents. In many cases, becoming a popular entertainer meant severing ties to these communities—if not permanently, then until success paved the golden path back into the good graces of the congregation.[259]

Beyond Rosetta Tharpe's aforementioned courageous movement between the sacred and the secular spheres of the music industry, some scholars argue that Tharpe's music was explicitly sexual. For Gayle Wald, playing guitar with virtuosity did not render Tharpe more masculine, but it did render her more sexual.[260] Wald says that even though Rosetta Tharpe was able to "make her guitar talk" it did not carry the same sexual connotations of a male rock and roll artist performing a "guitar solo as an orgasmic expression of male sexual libido."[261]

Wald quotes blues singer Etta James's first impressions of Rosetta Tharpe; James was taken by Rosetta's ability to be "plain" on stage one night, and glamourous the next. Wald summarizes: "Yet she [Etta James] seems equally taken with the mutability of Rosetta's display of sexuality: churchy and plain one day, glamorous and done up the next. For James, Rosetta's

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[259] Gayle Wald, *Shout, Sister, Shout!: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), x.

[260] Ibid., 154–55.

[261] Ibid., 72–73.

fearless flaunting of different styles of black femininity did not render her any less an artist; in fact it only confirmed her authority as a musician.[262] Wald equates glamour with femininity and sexuality. Yet, gospel artists in the platinum age do not stop at glamour in order to display their sexuality. They go a step further to wear clothing that would be deemed sexy in contemporary culture, beyond just glamorous. For example, Wald describes Tharpe as wearing long, sparkling gowns, whereas female gospel artists today would not just choose sparkling gowns, but also body contouring gowns.

> Slightly and yet perceptibly, the rising national popularity of Mahalia Jackson was dimming Rosetta's stardom. Beginning in 1949, the press—music publications and African-American newspapers alike—increasingly played the two off each other, contrasting Rosetta's Broadway background with Mahalia's renunciations of opportunities to crossover. Indeed, the angelic "Mother" Mahalia, who emerged in the 1950s could not have been more different from Rosetta, who remained "Sister" throughout her career—a small but telling point, insofar as her image was always more sexualized, more *flamboyant*. (The word, used frequently in the 1950s and 60s to describe Rosetta, referenced her flashiness and hinted at the sexual impropriety of homosexuals.) Rosetta played clubs, while Mahalia stuck to nontheatrical venues. Rosetta played blues, Mahalia (mostly) didn't. Rosetta played guitar, Mahalia sang along to the accompaniment of a piano or an organ, the traditional instruments of the church. Mahalia had greater vocal authority, Rosetta had zing. Once in circulation, it was difficult for Rosetta or anyone else to challenge the dualities that hardened into received wisdom.[263]

Ultimately, iconic gospel singer Mahalia Jackson's model of public piety, in the form of eschewing contemporary culture, proved more financially successful than Tharpe's crossover methods. It was not until the platinum age that gospel artists en masse could play clubs and other venues outside the church without garnering notable ecclesial admonition.

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[262] Ibid., 154.

[263] Ibid., 91.

Mixing the Main Thing and the Mainstream

The effort of gospel artists to attract and evangelize those outside of the black churches is commendable. In fact, since the inception of Christianity, believers have always accounted for contemporary culture as they have proselytized and discipled new groups of people. In this manner, gospel music has historically been a product of mixing sacred and secular music forms.

The performance of accessibility in gospel's platinum age has been facilitated by the recalibration of piety that has swept prominent Pentecostal churches. The *Recalibration of piety* is a hallmark of African American neo-Pentecostalism.[264] To live in a manner that is "in the world but not of it, unless it is in the name of Jesus," permits enjoyment of many accoutrements of popular culture while giving spiritual value to the same activities.[265] This recalibration of piety is the spiritual valorization of secular activities. Recalibration of piety is not simply changing the designation of an activity from "spiritually harmful" to "spiritually innocuous." Instead, it is saying that to participate in, and especially to organize, the activity with an evangelistic or spiritually disciplining intent makes the activity not only unharmful, but also spiritually edifying.

Recalibration of piety disrupts both the typical Pentecostal sacred-secular (or sacred-profane) binary and the typical Pentecostal conception of "in the world but not of it."[266] The danger of piety recalibration as manifested in the performance of accessibility is that more

[264] See chapter 2 for detailed explanation of theological shifts among Pentecostals that have facilitated platinum-certified success of a number of platinum-age gospel artists.

[265] The expression "in the world but not of it, unless in the name of Jesus" is taken from Jonathan Walton's *Watch This!*. Walton, *Watch This!*

[266] The words *secular* and *profane* are used interchangeably to represent that which is not sacred.

attention may be given to attracting and retaining the attention and affection of the audience, than is given to sincere rendering of sacred music.

There is a danger in trying so hard to emulate a musical culture that is increasingly more rachet, raunchy, outrageous in its misogyny, and schizophrenic in its nihilism on the one hand and conspicuous consumption on the other. To keep up, the gospel artist must also become more rachet, raunchy, ostentatious, and outrageous to remain competitive. At some point, gospel ceases to be a compelling alternative as it morphs into a good knock-off at best of popular music.[267]

In 2015, gospel soloist and former Destiny's Child member Michelle Williams opened the 30th Annual Stellar Awards—the nation's most celebrated black gospel awards program—singing her gospel hit "Say Yes." The real headliner of the awards show, however, was R&B/pop diva Beyoncé, who was featured along with Kelly Rowland on Williams's song. As Beyoncé sashayed to the middle of the stage in preparation for her solo in the song, the pre-recorded broadcast video cut to shots of various gospel stars standing and cheering her on. The broadcast of this one song during the Stellar Awards showed that platinum-age crossover gospel performance was a great assimilation project. The expression "in the world but not of it" used to mean obvious difference; now it meant radical sameness. Gospel artists were asking—explicitly or implicitly—how well can I blend in with mainstream culture, mainstream music forms, and

[267] Hip hop lyrics are not only normally sexually explicit, but also spectacular in depictions of violence and criminality. One musician told me that only until recently, hip hop music *required* discourses of drugs, guns, murder, money, and/or sex in order to achieve substantial sales. Therefore, when I speak of the pornography of hip hop, *pornography* refers to "the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction." Merriam-Webster Inc, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993).

mainstream metrics of sex-appeal? To blend, one must be able to look like the mainstream, and the mainstream must agree to ignore that which makes gospel artists different.

With the rise of social media, gospel artists and churches leaders gave mainstream celebrities permission to sing gospel in churches and other ecclesial settings. In the latter half of the platinum age, mainstream celebrities enjoyed a seemingly all-access pass to church aesthetics and venues without ecclesial interrogation that would certainly have come years earlier. In a 2003 *Gospel Industry Today* article, Mary Mary was asked about their relationship with mainstream artists (referred to as "secularism" in the questions):

> GIT [Gospel Industry Today]: More and more, secular artists seem to be circulating in traditionally Gospel-exclusive arenas. How will Christian values ultimately be affected by merging with secularism?
>
> Tina [Campbell]: Much of the success we've had has been because the world at large embraced us. What if the world decided to say, "We don't want to hear what these girls are talking about?" Then we wouldn't be able to spread this message at the level we're spreading it. So, I don't think we should completely shut out the secular world. Some Christians think [secular people are] not as holy as us, so we should not associate with them at all. I think it's definitely good to bring them in. You never know how we may affect a life.
>
> Erica [Campbell]: I don't ever remember the Bible talking about Christians being in a social club or having a "VIP Jesus Card." The Bible that I read speaks of us sharing and drawing people in and telling them what we do and making a difference in the lives of other people. If we isolate ourselves and say, "I'm a Christian. I'm better than you," then how do you ever win them? Is that really the God-like attitude? Is that really a Christ-like attitude? We are a part of the world. We're not "of" the world, but we are "in" the world.[268]

Yet, instead of gospel artists gaining more clout in the mainstream, this intense emphasis on collaboration and appearance with mainstream celebrities, especially on gospel awards and

[268] Carlton Hargo, "Mary Mary: Crystal Clear," *Gospel Industry Today*, February 2003, 10.

other shows such as *The Stellar Awards* and *BET*'s *Celebration of Gospel*, has rendered gospel artists unremarkable—radically the same as everyone else. Indeed, a contemporary gospel artist engages in accessible performance to show the black mainstream audience that the artist fits into mainstream black culture. The problem with assimilation is that there is always risk of losing some of what makes one's heritage and culture unique. Furthermore, as all music markets tighten and sales decrease, gospel artists are ceding their niche market to popular artists, while gospel singers as a whole likely experience less consumer loyalty in mainstream markets. Gospel artists are ceding their control of the churchgoing market in hopes of gaining exposure by association with popular artists in mainstream markets.

The predominant model of contemporary gospel music dissemination is for new music to flow down from major gospel labels and megachurches rather than up from independent artists and smaller churches. "Oh Happy Day" was a hit song that managed to bubble up from an independent community choir, rather than down from a major label.

The current model, on the other hand, is not necessarily the best way to get new, innovative music to the masses. A new platform for gospel music is needed, and a new sound. At the end of the golden age of gospel (1945-1965), contemporary gospel music was birthed with songs like "Oh Happy Day." Now, after the height of contemporary gospel—the platinum age—has passed, the stage is set for a new subgenre to emerge. In addition to moving into television, theater, and movies, now is the perfect time for contemporary crossover gospel artists to innovate musically rather than continue to follow popular music trends.

Conclusion

The sexy-for-Jesus phenomenon reflects a reorientation of gospel music toward religious discourse not about freedom from systems of socio-economic or socio-political oppression, but rather movement toward sexual liberation—albeit within the confines of heteronormative marriage. As gospel artists attend to audiences primarily outside of church, they are creating new music that does not support the liturgical priorities of praise, worship, proclamation of the Word, and edification of congregants. This sexy, accessible gospel might help individuals outside of church, but does little for public, corporate worship. As Pollard explains, "the church has become the party."[269] Since music is so central to liturgy in black evangelical churches, some of the meaning and ritual symbolism of liturgy is lost or obfuscated as gospel artists focus on appealing to the masses outside of the church.

[269] Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*.

Chapter 4
"He Sure Does Move His Hips A Lot:" Kirk Franklin's Performance of Accessibility

One brisk school night, I am sitting in a small classroom in Adams House, a dorm for sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduates at Harvard College. As a resident tutor at Adams House, I am on-call right now, or responsible for breaking up any unauthorized parties, and handling any emergencies that might arise. As I wait to do my second set of rounds for the night, I sit and chat with another resident tutor and a college senior who is content to hang out with us. We are all Christians, and somehow we begin to compare beloved hymns and congregational tunes. One of us mentions the worship ballad "Awesome God," composed by Rich Mullins.[270] Recognizing that we all know that song, we begin to compare arrangements. It is my turn to share, so I unlock my phone and pull up a YouTube video of platinum-age gospel artist Kirk Franklin directing his band of singers and musicians through "He Reigns," Franklin's Latin-tinged, upbeat remake of "Awesome God."

The slightly blurry video was apparently recorded at one of Franklin's Hopeville Tour concert stops in Austin, TX. The clip opens with Franklin's singers introducing the song with a harmonized, rubato rendition of the lyric "our God is an awesome God." With the singers flanked in a row behind him, Franklin, facing the audience, clasps his hands and sways his head

[270] Will Chang, "Awesome God - Rich Mullins W/ Lyrics," *YouTube.com*, accessed November 30, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w2b033DXCw.

to the mellifluous paean. Kirk Franklin's short frame—no more than 5'4", is draped in an oversized, blouse-like, white shirt of some breathable fabric, that partially covers a pair of dark leather pants. As the singers end their refrain in unison, Franklin declares to the audience: "Now I feel like getting' my praise on real quick." He follows with a question:

> Austin, can you dance with me? Austin, can you dance with me? Now, you know if we were at the club, you'd be getting your dance on. But, whom the son [Jesus Christ] sets free is free indeed! So get up on those 9 and a half's, and help me dance! Come on! Come on"[271]

The horn ensemble vibrantly delivers a syncopated melody as the band begins to drive the rhythm. Simultaneously, heeding his own directive, Franklin begins to demonstrate some dance moves that appear to be inspired by the legendary soul singer James Brown.[272]

As we huddle around my cell phone, the student attentively watches the phenomenon that is Kirk Franklin in concert. [273] He dances across the stage interjecting verbal commands to the audience, to the band, and to the background singers. Incidentally, Franklin does not consider himself a singer. Rather than sing even one lyric, Franklin often talks through a song—with

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[271] BrothaAja, "Kirk Franklin - He Reigns," *YouTube.com*, accessed November 22, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTN21C0py3M.

[272] By the time Kirk Franklin began his Hopeville Tour in the mid 2000s, he had already garnered a well-earned reputation for dancing and incorporating black popular music in his gospel compositions. Franklin himself admits that he was more a student of R&B and hip hop than gospel.

[273] In this sense, Franklin's dancing and grandstanding evokes scholar Daphne Brooks's definition of "spectacular performance." Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

energetic bursts of exhortation here and musical directives to musicians and singers there.[274] He is his own hype man.[275]

After watching for a minute or so, the student offers her commentary on the video. In so doing, she makes no mention of the bubbly arrangement of "He Reigns;" no mention of the alternation between unison female voices and three-part vocal harmony; not a word about the syncopated verses perfectly sung by a chorale of some of gospel's best background singers and soloists in the industry. Not a peep about the band's ability to seamlessly move between Latin, Caribbean, and African American rhythms. After watching no more than a couple minutes of Franklin dancing, directing, and hyping the crowd, the student comments incredulously, "He sure does move his hips a lot."

Her comment suggests that there is something sensual and not quite holy about the way Kirk Franklin is moving his body. Could this simply be a misinterpretation of black body movement by a white woman? Could she be reacting to the unintentional sex appeal which scholar and traditional gospel producer Anthony Heilbut asserts that gospel artists possess?[276] African American writer and cultural critic James Baldwin states that Black gospel music has a

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[274] The first line of Franklin's spoken-word track "The Story of Fear" on his *Hello Fear* album is "I can't sing, but I'm going to work hard for you to like me." During his introduction to "Mama's Song" on *The Family* (1994), Franklin says that he is "not much of a singer, but I'll do the best I can." "The Story of Fear," Kirk Franklin, *Hello Fear*, CD (Verity Gospel Music Records, a unit of Sony Music Entertainment, 2011); "Mama's Song," Kirk Franklin & The Family, *Whatcha Lookin' 4*, CD, 1996.

[275] Gospel artists Tye Tribbett, Gary Mayes, and especially James Fortune are contemporary gospel front men who have adopted Franklin's style of narrating a song with spoken rather than sung words.

[276] Anthony Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times*, 6th Limelight ed., 25th anniversary ed. (New York; Milwaukee, Wis.: Limelight Editions; Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2002), 76.

freedom that white Americans are unable to communicate or understand.[277] Franklin's dancing was accessible to black mainstream audiences, while it appeared to be illegible to the white student as she viewed Franklin from my phone. Furthermore, on other occasions, a number of black churchgoers also expressed to me their general chagrin at Franklin's popular dance moves and transgressive—at least by traditional black church standards—fashion choices.

The varied responses to Franklins oft moving hips shows that a performance need not be universally accessible to be effective. An artist targets a specific mainstream audience or group of audiences with accessible performance. The two mainstreams that black gospel artists most often targeted in the platinum age were the black popular and the white Christian mainstreams. Kirk Franklin was targeting the black mainstream in this particular performance. Black mainstream audiences would have read in Franklin's dance moves references to funk and soul artist James Brown. These audiences could see his participation in contemporary dance and fashion trends and his evocations of various popular artists' musical and fashion sensibilities. As the winningest platinum artist in the platinum age (1993-2013), Franklin provided a template for male contemporary gospel artists who wanted crossover success in black mainstream markets (and even among white CCM audiences).[278] Kirk Franklin's own brand of accessible

[277] While Baldwin offers a scathing critique of white musical sensibilities as he writes the quoted statement, I use his critique only to highlight, as ethicist Jonathan Walton pointed out to me in a colloquium, that Baldwin brings attention to the differences in white and black peoples' rendering and/or interpretation of gospel music. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, HRW Library (Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2000), 41–42.

[278] Kirk Franklin's song "Why We Sing" was widely accepted across race and Christian denomination. "Why We Sing," Kirk Franklin & The Family, *Kirk Franklin and The Family*, CD (GospoCentric, 1993). Franklin has collaborated with CCM artists including TobyMac and Mandisa ("Lose My Soul"), and Crystal Lewis "Lean on Me."

performance to the black mainstream helped catapult him to the forefront of contemporary gospel music.

As gospel artists targeted audiences on social media and in venues apart from church and parachurch platforms, they developed a set of performance practices for accessibility to the mainstream audiences. Historically, gospel artists were compelled to eschew many if not most of the aforementioned trappings of popular culture, as public piety demanded this sacrifice. Yet, by the late 1980s, pastors of prominent Pentecostal churches were recalibrating piety to allow for many activities and associations that would have previously been considered both sinful and just cause to divest a gospel artist of her or his spiritual (and, thereby, economic) capital.

By examining Kirk Franklin's career and performance practices, one can see that as black gospel front men performed their sexuality they had to deal with the stereotype threat of homosexuality in a way that gospel women did not. Kirk Franklin was the king of "pop-gospel" reincarnated in the platinum-age, and his performance of sexuality was in step with and in response to the stigma of homosexuality in black churches.

The Church Boy

Kirk Franklin was born Kirk Smith in Fort Worth, Texas, January 26, 1970. After his biological mother abandoned him, Franklin's great-aunt Gertrude Franklin adopted him and gave Franklin his current last name.[279] Gertrude Franklin raised young Kirk in church and made sure

[279] "'The Angel That Raised Me as a Kid': Kirk Franklin Fondly Remembers Adoptive Mother Gertrude - EEW Magazine - News from a Faith-Based Perspective," accessed November 29, 2016, http://buzz.eewmagazine.com/eew-magazine-buzz-blog/2015/2/12/the-angel-that-raised-me-as-a-kid-kirk-franklin-fondly-remem.html.

he was able to study piano. Franklin portrays the desperation of his biological mother in the very first track of his *Rebirth* album, entitled "Intro," and he literally sings the praises of his adoptive mother Gertrude in "Mama's Song" on his *Whatcha Lookin' 4* album.[280] By the time he reached age 7, it was clear that Franklin had a gift for playing piano. He studied classical piano in school, and by age 14, Franklin was working in local churches as a musician and choir director.

Choirs dominated the gospel charts in the 1980s and the early part of the 1990s.[281] Labels with many of gospel's biggest artists included Word Records, Benson Music Group, which was a (white) Christian label, Sparrow Records, Atlanta International Records (AIR), and Warner/Alliance Records (Table 4.1).[282]

Table 4.1 Major Gospel Labels and Prominent Artists--1991

Record Label	Major Gospel Artists in 1991
Word Records (also Sony/Word)	Shirley Ceasar; The Mighty Clouds of Joy; Rev. Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Singers; Douglas Miller; Inez Andrews; O'landa Draper & the Associates; Helen Baylor; Al Green

[280] "Intro," Kirk Franklin, *The Rebirth of Kirk Franklin*, CD (GospoCentric, 2002); "Mama's Song," Kirk Franklin & The Family, *Whatcha Lookin' 4*. Franklin's "Let it Go (Shout)" featuring TobyMac and Sonny Sandoval is also extremely biographical. "Let It Go," Kirk Franklin, *Hero*, CD (Sony Legacy, 2005).

[281] Tim A. Smith, "The Powerbrokers of Black Gospel Music," *Score*, August 1991, 16.

[282] This table is largely compiled from information in the article: Tim A. Smith, "The Powerbrokers of Black Gospel Music." At this time (1991), Theresa Hairston was "Director of A&R and Marketing for the Black Gospel division" at Benson (p. 16), Vicki Mack was product marketing manager at Sparrow Records, and Juandolyn Stokes was national promotions director at Atlanta International Records (p. 17). Ibid.

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Record Label	Major Gospel Artists in 1991
Benson Music Group	Commissioned; Albertina Walker; Clifton Davis (actor-singer); Thomas Whitfield; Fred Hammond
Sparrow Records	Daryl Coley; Ricky Grundy Chorale; Tremaine Hawkins; Richard Smallwood; BeBe and CeCe Winans; Mom and Pop Winans; West Angeles C.O.G.I.C.
Malaco/Savoy/Muscle Shoals Sound Gospel	Mississippi Mass Choir (Malaco); Walter Hawkins (Malaco); Rev. James Moore; Rev. James Cleveland (d. February 9, 1991) (Savoy); Dorothy Norwood (Malaco); LaShun Pace-Rhodes; Rev. Timothy Wright; Jackson Southernaires (Malaco); Bobby Jones and New Life; DFW Mass Choir (Savoy); Rev. Clay Evans (Savoy); New York Restoration (Savoy); GMWA Mass Choir (Savoy);
Atlanta International Records	James Bignon; Luther Barnes; Wilmington-Chester Mass Choir; F.C. Barnes;
Warner/Alliance Records (1 year old)	Take 6; Winans; Marilyn McCoo (formerly of 5th Dimension)
Tyscot	John P. Kee and New Life Choir
Light Records	Chicago Mass Choir; Beau Williams

In 1990, the Dallas Fort Worth Mass Choir (also known as DFW Mass Choir) began to assemble under the leadership of gospel artist and pastor Milton Bingham. Bingham was also a

key leader in the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA), which had by then become the largest and most influential gospel music workshop organization in the United States. Bingham invited Franklin to attend DFW Mass rehearsals, and Franklin soon became one of the choir's directors.[283] In 1992, after recording several of his songs with DFW Mass and the GMWA, Franklin recorded his own project with a group of singers he called "The Family."[284] He then shopped his live-recorded demo to record labels. After entertaining a number of offers, he providentially partnered with GospoCentric, a small startup gospel label. Franklin says that in 1992, GospoCentric was "a tiny, new company with almost no track record," whereas the other labels courting Franklin "were huge by comparison."[285] Franklin was moved both by label owner Vicki Mack Latallaide's confession of her love for God, and by her encouragement to him that he engage in prayerful deliberation of his options.[286] Kirk Franklin signed with the fledging label, and it was not long before Franklin began to see that he had made an excellent decision.

Male gospel artists had long been reaping the benefits of partnering with savvy businesswomen. As early as the 1930s, gospel musician and composer Thomas Dorsey (1899-1993) relied on the ingenuity of a strong business-minded woman, Sallie Martin, who helped him sell sheet music. Dorsey went on to become known as the father of gospel music for his

[283]Among the choir's most notable hits is "I'd Rather Have Jesus" which included sophisticated modulation in the vamp. Dallas Fort Worth Mass Choir, *Pressin' On*, CD, 2003. The song "I'd Rather Have Jesus" can be found at StyleNMan, "DFW Mass Choir-I'd Rather Have Jesus," *YouTube.com*, accessed November 29, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V12kLeHoUXs.

[284] Kirk Franklin, *Church Boy* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 147.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Ibid., 147–48.

compositions such as "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," *and* for his aggressive dissemination and sale of gospel music to musicians and artists around the country. In so doing, he brought gospel music from the Sanctified fringes of black American Christendom to the mainline of African American churches between the 1930s and 1960s. Just as Dorsey had the business help (and background vocals) of Sallie Martin, Kirk Franklin had Latallaide.

While Latallaide did not perform with Franklin, as Martin had done with Dorsey, Latallaide's 's industry acumen proved more than enough to take Franklin's music around the country and the world. Latallaide and her husband Claude founded GospoCentric with six thousand dollars, faith in God, and Vicki Latallaide's previous years of experience in the gospel music industry, including her tenure as product marketing manager at Sparrow Records. Once she signed Franklin, she moved quickly to get his project on the national market. As a new label member at GospoCentric, Franklin released *Kirk Franklin and The Family* nationally in 1993. He recalls the release happening as follows:

> GospoCentric bought that original tape from me for five thousand dollars, cleaned it up, did some new voice- and sound-over dubs, then put together an incredible master and released *Why We Sing* in June 1993.[287]

The album had an eclectic blend of contemporary worship selections, including "Why We Sing," which made its way up the black gospel charts and into white American evangelical worship canons. "Why We Sing" was number one on the Christian charts by March 1994, and before the year was over, the song had hit the R&B charts.[288]

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[287] Ibid., 149.

[288] Ibid., 151.

By the early 1990s, even traditional gospel artists, such as The Williams Brothers, were working to cross over to popular and Christian charts. The Williams Brothers started their own record company, Blackberry Records in 1991. The Brothers released *This is Your Night* with the intent to target markets beyond black churchgoers. Group member Doug Williams stated, "For the first time, we are targeting not only the traditional black gospel market, but also the urban contemporary market and the white Christian market. We haven't really been in these markets before."[289] Williams explained the plan to accomplish this crossover success:

> First of all, you have to have the product, the songs that will appeal to people in the market. Then you have to have people who can promote your record in that market. What we did was have three independent distributors, one on the East Coast, one on the West Coast, and one in Nashville. We will also be looking to distribute our album in Europe and Africa.[290]

Williams highlighted the importance of distribution, or the process of moving units of recorded music to places where consumers can purchase them. Lataillade knew that, and she and her husband crafted GospoCentric to utilize the "dual-marketing approach" of cultivating consumer markets among both gospel audiences and mainstream listeners.[291]

GospoCentric's success with Kirk Franklin was no accident. Vicki Mack Lataillade had already had an accomplished career in the music industry. She started as an intern at RCA Records in 1975, and then moved to Light Records, where she worked in marketing and promotion position for gospel artists Tremaine Hawkins, Walter Hawkins, and Andraé

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[289] Pepper Smith, "The Other Side of the Business: An Interview with the Williams Brothers," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, November 1991, 13.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Deborah Price, "The Last Word: Q&A with Vicki Mack Lataillade," *Billboard - The International Newsweekly of Music, Video and Home Entertainment* 117, no. 3 (2005): 62.

Crouch.[292] She moved to Sparrow Records in 1988.[293] She saw RCA and other labels take country mainstream in the 1970s using the dual-marketing approach.[294] CCM followed soon after in the 1980s. It was the gospel industry's turn at bat.

Lataillade secured distribution with Sparrow/CEMA and expanded her roster of artists to include "Kirk Franklin & The Family, Kurt Carr, A-1 Swift, LaMore, TrKurt Carr, LA-Swift, LaMore, Tri City Singers, Stephanie Mills, and Lawrence Matthews."[295] Franklin and The Family's success surpassed all expectations, however. Lataillade said to gospel music magazine *Score*:

> "I knew it was a good record, and I told my husband I believed it could do 100,000 [albums sold], but that was a dream. Even today [July/August 1994 magazine issue], we're working hard, but when Kirk made the pop charts, we were shocked! You know…" she pauses for a moment, "what it's really done for me is to provide confirmation from the Lord that what I was doing was all right, and that I could make a difference."[296]
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> In much the same way as CeCe Winans had done, Vicki Mack Latallaide counted the runaway sales success of Franklin's first project as evidence that this focus on garnering mainstream audiences and crossing over to popular charts was sanctioned by God.[297]

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[292] Ibid.

[293] Vicki Mack Lataillade later sold GospoCentric and its sister label B-Rite Music to Zomba Label Group in 2004.

[294] Price, "The Last Word."

[295] Lisa Collins, "Making a Difference: Vicki Mack Lataillade," *Score*, August 1994.

[296] Ibid.

[297] See chapter 1 for CeCe Winans's discussion of her own platinum-sales success.

Kirk Franklin's Sound

Kirk's first breakout project *Kirk Franklin and The Family* (1993) was not musically revolutionary. The album's most notable song "Why We Sing" did include a tonicization in the opening lyric of the song. [298] But, in general, the chord progressions were standard fare for contemporary gospel. If anything, they were rather fundamental. In fact, the song "Call on Him" on the same album could have been considered traditional for its use of blues notes (b7 and b3) and blues chords, and for the keyboard and lead vocal embellishments. Perhaps the most lyrically progressive song was "Letter to My Friend," in that it was sung in second person as a letter to Jesus. Yet, its chorus included standard tropes, such as asking for the "anointing" and asking Jesus to "let your loving arms surround me:"[299]

"Letter to My Friend"

[Chorus]
Watch over me and protect me
From the things I cannot see
Let Your loving arms surround me
From here to eternity
Lord, I need Your anointing
So my spirit can be free
Lord, I need You more,
And more, and more, and more

The least "churchy" song on the album was "Real Love," which instrumentally most resembles an R&B song, and the lyrics certainly could have "passed" for romantic love lyrics. Yet, the repeating chorus "He loves me" brings the song back to church.

[298] On the phrase "why do we sing" there is a IV-II-V chord progression, tonicizing the V.

[299] See chapter 2 for detailed discussion of the "anointing."

Franklin described his sophomore project *Whatcha Lookin' 4* as having a "slightly more progressive sound."[300] And, it was certainly sonically edgier than the first album. For example, unlike any song on his previous album, the title track evoked New Jack Swing, which was a preeminent black popular music that emerged around the late 1980s. The R&B groups Guy, Boyz II Men and other had solidified New Jack Swing's place black popular music marketplace by the early 1990s. Producer and founding member of Guy, Teddy Riley is one of the key engineers of the sound, as featured on his song "Teddy's Jam" (1988). The Winans collaborated extensively with Teddy Riley on their 1990 release *Return* (Warner Bros. Gospel).[301] Riley even rapped on the the Winans's track "It's Time." While it would be easy to dismiss this type of collaboration with the popular producer and rapper as purely an effort to gain popular markets, Ronald Winans stated, "we're not selling out because music is our ministry and singing is our forte. But, at the same time, if a certain audience is tuned into a certain form of music, we're willing to give it a try because we want to reach them with the message."[302]

Kirk Franklin's success performing pop-gospel in the mid-to-late 1990s, marked a turning point in gospel music. Franklin, with the marketing genius of his label run by Vicki Mack Latallaide, provided a new template for male gospel performers and set a precedent for success in the platinum age after which many gospel artists are still modeling themselves.

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[300] Franklin, *Church Boy*, 153; Kirk Franklin & The Family, *Whatcha Lookin' 4*.

[301] Arsenio Orteza, "Review of The Winans, Return," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, September 1991.

[302] Edwin Smith, "The Winans: Musicians with a Mission," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, November 1991, 20.

Golden-Age Pop-Gospel's Precedent

Kirk Franklin has sustained his career on "pop-gospel" or gospel music composed and positioned for crossover to black popular performance venues, radio, and sales charts. In the early 1960s, *Billboard* magazine used the moniker *pop-gospel* to describe nightclub-oriented gospel music. I suggest that the term *pop-gospel* can be applied to contemporary gospel music that has been produced for nonecclesiastical purposes.

Before the 1960s, black gospel artists largely sold their recorded material at workshops, and via agents at the end of concerts, conferences, and church services. Gospel composer Thomas Dorsey, who also had a notable career as a blues pianist, was more known for selling sheet music of his gospel blues numbers as opposed to selling recordings. He partnered with Mahalia Jackson, among others, who would sing his compositions in churches across the country. With the NCGCC's first national gathering in 1933 Dorsey was creating a network of church musicians and music ministers who would take his and other black gospel music composers' music across the country.[303]

The relentless dissemination and performance of gospel music by Thomas Dorsey, Mahalia Jackson, and scores of other singers, songwriters, and publishers worked to make gospel respectable in the middle class black Baptist and Methodist churches of Chicago and elsewhere. By the late 1960s, gospel music was no longer associated primarily with black Sanctified or Pentecostal and working class congregations. In the black church world, gospel had arrived. Yet,

[303] Even though gospel has historically been considered a music taught by rote and played by ear, the NCGCC is continues to emphasize written scores.

only a small number of artists were achieving (verifiable) life-sustaining income from their performances and recordings.

The early 1960s also saw the short-lived attempt to promote pop-gospel, or R&B-inflected gospel music fit for performance in gospel clubs.[304] The Sweet Chariot nightclub in New York featured a gospel-only performance line up, including singers with angels' wings. Columbia negotiated for exclusive rights to record otherwise unsigned artists' live recordings at the club. The Herman Singers were one such group, as advertised in *Billboard* Magazine (Figure 4.1).[305]

[304] "SINGLES PAIR GOES GOSPEL," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, July 13, 1963; B. O. B. Rolontz, "Sweet in Chariot, Sour on Records," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, August 31, 1963; "Gospel Disks Made on Spot Hitting Mkt," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, June 1, 1963; Grevatt Ren, "And Now Gospel's Popping Into Pop Field," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, June 8, 1963.

[305] "EPIC," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, June 1, 1963.



Figure 4.1 Pop-Gospel Advertisement. Billboard, June 1, 1963

Yet, 1960s pop-gospel did not see much success. Music industry magazine *Billboard* quoted Fred Mendelsohn, the artist and repertoire (A&R) director of Savoy Records discounting "pop gospel" as a trendy gimmick that was destined to fail:

> About two and one half years ago … there occurred the so-called pop-gospel fad … but it was just that—a fad; it lacked authenticity and it had to fail because this music does not belong in night clubs.[306]

Some speculated that Mahalia Jackson, one of the most famous gospel artists of all time, single-handedly upended the pop-gospel trend when she spoke out against it. In any case, by 1963, it was clear that pop-gospel and its concomitant night clubs would not be a huge money maker for the major record companies.[307] Mahalia commented on its demise in a *Billboard* article:

> "No man wants to be pulled down, and pop gospel music was like pulling God down," she [Mahalia Jackson] explained. "If a man wants to hear good jazz, he goes where it's being played," she offered by way of comparison. "I don't think he would listen to anything which is messed up. This messed up [pop-gospel] music made people stop and think for themselves [and stop patronizing pop-gospel]."[308]

Ironically, Mahalia Jackson herself was no stranger to success in the popular music marketplace. According to gospel music journalist Bill Carpenter, "Her first big hit, *Move On Up a Little Higher*, was released on the Apollo label in 1947. The record was an instant hit, not only with gospel music enthusiasts, but with jazz fans as well. It sold over two million copies.… Jackson continued to have a string of million selling singles."[309] Yet, Mahalia's style was very traditional, and did not obviously conform to popular music and culture standards, as pop-gospel did. By the late 1960s, gospel vocalists set the bar for great black popular vocal performance.

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[306] "RELIGIOUS MUSIC: CHURCH SOUND RINGS THE BELL IN POP FIELD," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)* 77, no. 9 (February 27, 1965): 34.

[307] Elliot Tiegel, "Pop Gospel Not of U.S.--Mahalia," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000)*, September 28, 1963.

[308] Ibid.

[309] Bil Carpenter, "God's Gold," 11.

Popular artists such as Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, and Ray Charles, were known to have cultivated their sounds in, or borrowed largely from, black church music. Further, Jackson made clear that conforming gospel music to popular music trends for mainstream sales was unconscionable. When asked what gospel artists should do after pop-gospel flopped, Jackson said, "They [pop-gospel artists] can go back to the church…. People will accept and forgive them. When a man stumbles he can be forgiven."[310]

Mahalia Jackson's declaration that the church would forgive, signals this prominent and influential gospel artist's belief that creating and performing pop-gospel was sloppy and profane at best and sinful at worst—something that needed to be forgiven. Gospel artists were not supposed to make pop-gospel, and black popular artists were not supposed to record gospel. Those were the unwritten rules.

Aretha Franklin was a notable exception. Professor and music producer Anthony Heilbut speaks of popular artist Aretha Franklin's anomalous positive reception when she recorded gospel music:

> The standard-bearer of pop-gospel remains Aretha Franklin. "Amazing Grace," [Atlantic Recording Corporation, 1972] in which she was accompanied by James Cleveland and the Southern California Community Choir, became her best-selling Atlantic album. For her new label, Arista, she recorded another gospel album, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism," [1987] this time in her father's church, accompanied on keyboard by the late Thomas Whitfield (formerly the musician-arranger for her most gifted disciple, Vanessa Bell Armstrong) with guest vocals by Mavis Staples and Joe Ligon, lead singer of the Mighty Clouds of Joy, who still sounded uncannily like C.L. Franklin. Despite the presence of [contemporary gospel artist and arranger Thomas] Whitfield, not to mention the Contemporary community identified with Detroit, Franklin adhered to the old

[310] Tiegel, "Pop Gospel Not of U.S.--Mahalia."

> Ward Singers formula, as she recreated Marion Williams' biggest hits "Surely God is Able" and "Packin' Up."[311]

Franklin was a "pop-gospel" artist in so much as she was a nationally recognized pop artist making gospel music. Her father Rev. C.L. Franklin was a very well-known preacher and pastor of a megachurch in Detroit. He defended his daughter's professional music choices against ecclesial naysayers. Support from her prominent father provided the ecclesial authorization to both record popular music, and return to the church and record gospel. In the 1970s and 1980s, she was an exception in this regard.[312]

As if responding to Mahalia Jackson's evocation of forgiveness, Heilbut continues his discussion of Aretha Franklin by saying, "The church has clearly forgiven Aretha."[313] Jackson and Heilbut both suggest that there was something considered fundamentally wrong in taking God's music to the unconsecrated masses with the intent to make money.

Although pop-gospel was deemed a failure, there were a handful of artists who were able to keep gospel in the clubs. Clara Ward had a show in Las Vegas, and Mahalia, as previously mentioned, was selling recordings in the millions. In the 1980s, the traditional quartet singers The Five Blind Boys of Alabama were performing regularly in clubs. Yet, the Blind Boys never abandoned their traditional sounds or messages. Of the club audiences' tastes for gospel, Blind

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[311] Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*, 340. Heilbut uses the term pop-gospel to represent blending of popular and sacred music, yet he ties the *pop* of *pop-gospel* to post-WWII "soul" gospel. He describes Aretha Franklin as a traditional gospel singer, despite her employment of the contemporary artists and arrangers in the production of her last gospel album *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*.

[312] See chapter 2, for more on the criticism gospel artists such as the Clark Sisters and the Winans faced criticism for crossover, and how attitudes among prominent church leaders shifted in the 1980s and 1990s.

[313] Heilbut, *The Gospel Sound*, 340.

Boys co-founder Clarence Founder stated "They don't want to hear any of that new stuff."[314] As outlined in previous chapters, the Clark Sisters were finding their music played in clubs, and The Winans reintroduced pop-gospel in the late 1980s, followed by gospel group Commissioned. So, Kirk Franklin and his various conglomerations of singers were far from the first to market to the masses and take gospel to club venues. He was, however the catalyst for the explosion of pop-gospel artists since the 1990s.

Mahalia Jackson stood out in the 1960s because she was a black gospel artist selling millions of records, while her rhetoric held to traditional doctrines of piety. After great ecclesial shifts and the new preeminence of neo-Pentecostal and charismatic megachurches in the 1980s, gospel artists in the platinum age were poised to benefit from the music industry's new investments in taking gospel to profane spaces.[315]

Platinum-age gospel artists could then move within popular spaces and create myriad "pop-gospel" or crossover hits without risking acceptance in ecclesial spaces.[316] Prior to the 1990s, a gospel artist's brand and authenticity were measured in large part by how well the artist publicly performed piety. The artist was expected to demonstrate a lifestyle above reproach and distanced from contemporary popular culture.[317] Now, they had more ecclesial leeway than their

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[314] Pepper Smith, "From Happy Land to Clubland with The Five Blind Boys of Alabama," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, May 1992, 6.

[315] See chapter 2 for discussion of neo-Pentecostalism.

[316] Chapter 2 discusses the theological shift that took place among prominent church pastors, allowing for gospel artists to interact with mainstream audiences and produce popular entertainment without risk of alienation from these large churches.

[317] See chapter 2 for discussion of piety, sanctification, and how expectations shifted in the 1980s.

golden-age predecessors to attempt crossover success through pop-gospel. In all, the platinum age of gospel is unique, not because of the influx of marketing capital and distribution of black gospel music into the mainstream, but because prominent church leaders and gospel artists themselves recalibrated piety to allow for accoutrements of contemporary popular culture.

From Church Boy to Gospel's Platinum-selling Star

Kirk Franklin's very first album went platinum. This was a rare accomplishment. Reunion Records president Jeff Moseley explained in 1988:

> With most major record companies, eight out of every 10 releases lose money—the 80-20 rule. Just like motion pictures. You might get on a roll and have three out of 10 make money. In the end, your very successful artists are giving you the chance to release new artists—and lose money on them. Unless it is something unusual, your record company can expect to lose money on the first record and has a 50-50 chance on the second album of losing money as well—in hopes of pulling it out on the third record.[318]

Franklin's debut album was selling so well, that the label delayed the release of his second project *Whatcha Lookin' 4* until 1996. Lataillade acquired a distribution deal with Interscope Records in 1997. Interscope was the same company that was newly taking gangsta rap to the nation. Partnering with Interscope for distribution guaranteed placement of Franklin's recordings in retailers across the country.

The song that propelled Franklin into the limelight as a radical, envelope-pushing gospel artist was the crossover hit "Stomp." Franklin recorded the song with Dallas, TX urban youth choir God's Property (also known as GP) on the choir's debut album *God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation* (GospoCentric, 1997). With the newly minted Interscope distribution

[318] Bob Darden, "New Artist Development: Reunion Records," 37.

partnership, this album went double-platinum. Franklin and God's Property recorded two versions of the song: "Stomp" and "Stomp (Remix)" on the God's Property album. The remixed version was an instrumental cover of funk artist George Clinton and group Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove" (1978).

Kirk Franklin opened both versions of "Stomp" with a rabble-rousing declamation.

> For those of you that think that gospel music has gone too far.
> You think we've gotten too radical with our message.
> Well I got news for you; you ain't heard nothin' yet,
> And if you don't know, now you know. Glory, Glory![319]

Cheryl James, also known as Salt of rapping girl-group Salt-n-Peppa, rapped the following lyrics in her signature verse on "Stomp (Remix)."

> When I think about the goodness and fullness of God
> Makes me thankful, pity the hateful, I'm grateful
> The Lord brought me through this far
> Trying to be cute when I praise him, raise him high
> I keep it live. Beat bumping
> Keep it jumping, make the Lord feel something
> Ain't no shame in my game, God's Property
> Kickin' it with Kirk. Ain't no stoppin' me,
> Now stomp[320]

The expression "Trying to be cute while I praise him" could be the summation of liturgical and sanctification theologies of pop-gospel artists since the 1990s. As these "sexy saints" performed accessibility to reach audiences outside the church, they took a by-any-means-necessary

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[319] God's Property, Salt, and Franklin, *Stomp (Remix)*; God's Property and Kirk Franklin, *God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation*, CD, 1997.

[320] God's Property, Salt, and Franklin, *Stomp (Remix)*; God's Property and Franklin, *God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation*.

approach to advertising their sex-appeal and their sexual competitiveness with mainstream artists.

Gospel music veteran BeBe Winans passionately defended his sexually charged persona to *The Grio* reporter Chris Witherspoon in a videotaped interview:

> Chris Witherspoon: Has that been something that's been a part of your message purposely, to kind of keep that swagger?
>
> BeBe Winans: I can't help it that I'm sexy for Jesus…What I think is important and what I do is I take care of myself physically. I think it's important because we live in a world that judges what they see at the end of the day. So, it's important for me to look and feel good, because that shows in your character and in confidence. So, I think it plays a part in what we do as far as entertaining."[321]

While his brothers Marvin and Carvin took more conservative stances than their younger brother in the interview, BeBe articulated a new normal in gospel. The new platinum-age normal was an explicitly sexualized presentation of self. Goffman discusses the presentation of self as a collection of fronts.[322] The gospel artist must have a front of salvation in the evangelical sense. More specifically, the gospel artist must be able to articulate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through behavior and attire, rather than through verbal declarations. Historically, the artist demonstrated relationship with Christ through abstention from ecclesiastical vices and kind treatment of fans. Artists also had to communicate possession of the anointing, or power and authority of the Holy Spirit to act on God's behalf.[323] Since the 1990s, gospel artists prioritized

[321] Witherspoon, "Winans Brothers Discuss Being 'Sexy for Jesus.'"

[322] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

[323] See chapter 2 for explanation of *sanctification* and *anointing*.

the performance of accessibility to mainstream audiences.[324] This performance called for fluency in contemporary culture.

As contemporary American culture was preoccupied with sex, gospel artists took great pains to present themselves as sexy. Prior to the platinum age, the gospel artists wanted to show they had the anointing. In the platinum age, they wanted to display the anointing *and* sex appeal. I asked gospel artist Fred Hammond, if this was a result of record label pressure, or the artists' own volition:

> Charrise Barron: So, you used the word sexy. So there's this thing now, this thing —sexy-for-Jesus. Do you feel like a lot of… gospel artists now—they're pressured into a kind of sexy-for-Jesus?
>
> Fred Hammond: Nah [no]. They ain't pressured. That's what they want to do. It ain't like [they're] pressured. It's ok to be sexy, and we're sexual beings. I just think there's an appropriate place for it.… I believe my swag is sexy, meaning I'm not here wearing tight pants…. I just believe the way I carry myself, a woman can look at that and say, wow that man is a worshipper. And I'm not corny with it.[325]

"I got swag" is a performative statement that many gospel artists employ to deem themselves cool and even sexy. Even gospel artist Fred Hammond evoked the term to describe his own sense of style and appeal when he said "I believe my swage is sexy." Further, Hammond stated:

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[324] Praise and worship artists also perform accessibility for black church audiences. Just as BeBe Winans had done, P&W artists argue that you must look good, in any circumstance, to attract people's attention. They can only witness or disciple someone who cares to pay attention, and the gospel artist's appearance does the work of grabbing or averting the audience's attention. In this sense, they unconsciously elevate the power of fashionability over anointing, to arrest people's attention.

[325] Hammond, interview.

> I can bring my [perspective to the stage with me]: this is how I think; I'm in the hood; I'm from the hood; I'm O.K. with being a *man*; I'm not effeminate. So, I think that may be sexy to somebody. (emphasis his)[326]

Hammond made clear that he was particularly invested in exhibiting masculinity for female gaze. Hammond's declaration that he is a man spoke to the balance that he and other gospel artists sought to strike between being spiritual and holy, *and* embracing one's own sexual self. His statement: "I'm O.K. with being a man; I'm not effeminate," articulated his gender and sexuality before I could even ask the question. In so doing, he was disassociating himself with the stereotypes of homosexuality and effeminacy that were often imagined of male gospel artists.

Black Men in Gospel and Black Masculine Anxiety

Even with the relaxation of various strictures since the early 1990s in prominent black evangelical churches, prohibitions against same-gender loving relationships, for the most part, remained. Consequently, the relatively new freedom to consciously and conspicuously display sexuality was restricted by conventions of heteronormativity in most prominent and smaller churches alike. Even still, many gospel artists were known or rumored to have queer sexual orientations.

In any case, as a male church musician in the 1980s and 1990s, Kirk Franklin was not immune to questions about his sexuality. Kirk speaks candidly in his autobiography *Church Boy* about his anxiety about being considered homosexual.

> I think another reason I got into so much trouble with sexual temptations during those years was that I was trying to fight my "image." I didn't talk about

[326] Ibid.

> my church activities very much at school, but some of the kids found out about them and started teasing me. They called me "Church Boy."
>
> I didn't mind so much when they called me "Church Boy." But they also called me "Mama's Boy" and started making jokes that I was gay, and that was painful. In the church, especially the African-American church during the seventies and eighties, homosexuality was a big problem. It still is in some places.
>
> It is problem today and gospel music—a major concern—and everybody knows it. Part of the trouble many artists have in gaining acceptance of the church is that a lot of people just assume we are promiscuous and probably homosexual. We're not, but it's out there.
>
> Homosexuality seems to be very common in the arts crowd, and I do not know why that should be. It seems that more than half the young people involved in dance music and the theater are openly gay. In fact, wherever people are talented and expressive. There seems to be a tendency towards homosexuality, and the gospel music scene has not been exempt from that.
>
> I wasn't gay, but running from the image got me even more involved with girls.[327]

The very first time I met Kirk Franklin many years ago, I was struck with two strong reactions. First, I was moved by how kind and receptive he was to this passerby at a gospel event. It was probably immediately obvious that I was a total stranger, and a total fan. He made eye contact, shook my hand, and gave the impression that he was genuinely happy to meet me. Secondly, I was struck by his height. I would estimate his height to be around five feet, four inches, which is considered very short for men in the USA. As American society ties masculinity to height, his height may have caused some people to perceive his masculinity as diminished.

Additionally, as Franklin stated, being a male church musician and choir director in the 1970s and 80s, and even into the 90s, automatically carried stereotypes about sexuality. In his

[327] Franklin, *Church Boy*, 39–40.

youth, Franklin worked hard to combat the image of homosexuality by dating a lot of girls and engaging in sexual activity. Ultimately this led to an addiction to porn that he confessed years later on Oprah Winfrey's talk show.[328]

Furthermore, early in his career, Franklin was active in the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA), which was well known for male attendees transgressing gender and sexuality norms.[329] Later in his career, Franklin tended to call attention to his gender expression because of his personal style and fashion. In the 1990s, he could be seen in white shirts with ruffled sleeves, reminiscent of the stylings of R&B sex symbol Prince. By the mid 2000s, Franklin could be seen in skinny jeans and slim fitting pants with the hems rolled up to expose his ankles. His attire certainly fit the category of a "metrosexual," or a male person who pays much attention to style and coiffure.[330] Many in the African American church community saw his clothing as effeminate.

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[328] "Famous Gospel Singer Admits His Addiction to Porn," *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, November 30, 2005.

[329] Prominent parachurch platforms such as the GMWA allowed more range of gender expression (at least for men) than local churches. While I have not yet attended a GMWA convention, musicians and artists have told me that some people jokingly say that GMWA stands for "Gay Men With Aids." I have also been told that at one time, some men wore hair rollers through the halls of the convention. Because hair rollers are coded as feminine in American society, a man wearing hair rollers transgresses gender norms. Indeed, it was a well-known open secret that GMWA founder James Cleveland (1931-1991) was gay. He was also rumored to have died of AIDS. Christopher Harris, for example, sued the Cleveland estate after Cleveland's death, claiming that Cleveland sexually abused him and infected him with HIV. "James Cleveland Infected L.A. Youth With HIV, $ 9 Mil. Lawsuit Claims," *Jet*, March 2, 1992, 62.

[330] Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a "metrosexual" as "a usually urban heterosexual male given to enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes." "Metrosexual | Definition of Metrosexual by Merriam-Webster," accessed January 10, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metrosexual. This is a term that arose in popular culture during the 1990s. My first recollection of the term was when it was used to describe Ryan Seacrest, then host of the popular *American Idol* television show.

Over the last half century (at least), gospel front men and male worship leaders cultivated spectacularly queer expressions of gender in their gospel music presentations.[331] At the same time, the stigma of queer expressions of gender and sexuality burdened male gospel artists with a kind of stereotype threat differently, and more strongly, than it did women. Women in gospel dealt with these stereotype threats as well, but people were much less likely to assume that an artist or musician was lesbian when she conformed to norms of femininity. And, most gospel women did adhere to normative gender expression.

Social psychologist Claude Steele explored "identity contingencies" or "the things you have to deal with in a situation because you have a given social identity" in his book *Whistling Vivaldi*.[332] According to Steele, stereotype threat is a type of identity contingency which "springs from our human powers of intersubjectivity—the fact that as members of society we have a pretty good idea of what other members of our society think about a lot of things, including the major groups and identities in society."[333] Steele explains that stereotype threat is a "predicament" because it is the anxiety that arises from knowing the negative stereotypes for the social group(s) to which one has been assigned, while also knowing that one's own actions could "confirm" those negative stereotypes in others' eyes.[334] Steele provides the account of Brent Staples, an African American man and *New York Times* columnist, to show that suffering from

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[331] Here I am referencing Daphne Brook's discussion of spectacular performance. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*.

[332] Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, 3.

[333] Ibid., 5.

[334] Ibid.

stereotype threat can affect one's behavior. While walking through Chicago neighborhood Hyde Park at night, Brent Staples recounted that he would sense white people's fear of him because of the stereotype that black men were violent. To ease his own nervousness resulting from the stereotype threat, Staples would whistle Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* as he walked through the park. Staples subsequently perceived that whistling a Classical tune eased the fear in white passersby.[335] Just as Staples "whistled Vivaldi," black male gospel artists find ways both to mitigate stereotype threat and avoid confirming the stereotype.

Similarly, English and Africana studies scholar Stacy Boyd explains that black male Christians experience "black masculine anxiety" in his book *Black Men Worshipping*.[336] Drawing from a range of scholars including bell hooks, Philip Brian Harper, and Kelly Brown Douglas, Boyd argues the black masculine anxiety is a prevailing concern that affects the way black male Christians form their identities and express their gender and sexuality.[337] Boyd implies that black masculine anxiety is the perceived threat of extinction or diminishment of masculinity that black men, and especially black Christian man often feel. Boyd goes on to explain that this anxiety can be traced to patriarchal and white supremacist ideas or conceptions of what black men should be in contrast to white masculinity. More specifically, a white man must be able to dominate and engage in patriarchal control of black bodies in order to maintain white masculinity. This in turn leaves black man wanting to also engage in domination and

[335] Ibid., 6.

[336] Boyd, *Black Men Worshipping*, 10.

[337] Ibid., 3–7, 88–89.

patriarchal control in order to display their masculinity. Yet, black men lack the protections of racial privilege that white men possess in America. Boyd's assessments imply that masculinity is a moving target based on social constructions of race, and especially the production of white American masculinity by means of the subjugation of black male bodies.[338] This leaves for black men a precarious social structure upon which to build their own identities. The result is a pervasive anxiety.

In the face of this black masculine anxiety, there have been some noticeable instances of artists taking demonstrative stances against homosexuality and "alternative lifestyles." Gospel artist Donnie McClurkin, for instance, was (and continues to be) very vocal about his subjection to sexual abuse as a child, and about what he describes as deliverance from and denunciation of homosexuality. In fact, the title of his book *Eternal Victim Eternal Victor* references the abuse he endured and his ability to overcome the hurt of the experience.[339] He subsequently experienced backlash from members and allies of gender and sexuality minority communities for his anti-gay rhetoric.

The Pentecostal Church as Transgressive Social Space

Some may argue, black masculine anxiety notwithstanding, that men in black churches—from the pulpit to the musicians' pit, have always enjoyed more freedom to express both normative and transgressive sexuality. (Women were taught to be discreet, whereas ostentatious men were often celebrated in predominantly black ecclesial spaces.) In his groundbreaking

[338] Ibid., 5.

[339] Donnie McClurkin, "Introduction," in *Eternal Victim/Eternal Victor* (Pneuma Life Publishing, 2001).

biography of Azusa Street Revival leader William Seymour, religious historian Gastón Espinosa argues that Seymour's "vision and version" of Pentecostalism attracted so many followers precisely because it was a transgressive social space. Espinosa says:

> [T]he power and attraction of the Azusa Street revival lay in Seymour's ability to create a Christian transgressive social space wherein people from diverse backgrounds could watch, cross, and selectively engage in otherwise socially, racially, theologically, and denominationally prohibited and/or stigmatized practices in American society. These practices included speaking in unknown tongues; interracial and interdenominational mixing; touching, hugging, and laying hands on people for prayer and divine healing across race, class, and gender lines; exorcising evil spirits; engaging in enthusiastic worship and Negro spirituals; and testifying and prophesying, all reportedly, under the power [of] the Holy Spirit.[340]

Espinosa emphasizes the socially transgressive acts of interracial worship during the early 1900s—not even a decade past what historian Rayford Logan refers to as the "nadir of American race relations."[341] As Espinosa points out, Seymour's Azusa Street Revival was burgeoning in Los Angeles on the west coast, while a brutal race riot had broken out in Atlanta on the east coast.[342] Espinosa highlights the ways in which Seymour's Pentecostal movement created transgressive social spaces in which social identities—especially with respect to race, could be

[340] Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Duke University Press, 2014), 32. Espinosa uses the term "vision and version" to describe William Seymour's particular iteration of Pentecostalism, eg. p. 100.

[341] Rayford Whittingham Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901.* (New York: Dial Press, 1954).

[342] Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History*, 57.

recast. For example, black men prayed for or laid hands on white women, thereby transgressing racial and socio-economic class lines.[343]

Yet, Espinoza admits that to avoid "sexual impropriety," men would have laid hands on women only when other women were present.[344] That is to say, there were still boundaries even in these decidedly transgressive social spaces. In the platinum age (1993-2013), the boundaries remained at the margins of normative sexual identity in black neo-Pentecostal churches, even as these churches continued to facilitate the reimagining of various social identities.

As previously stated, gender expression usually served as an indicator of sexual orientation in black evangelical churches. Even still, men were allowed to transgress gender norms of attire to include, for example, colors such as pink and fuchsia, which have been coded as feminine in American society. Likewise, certain hand gestures, enunciations, and dramaturgical representation in worship have also been coded feminine. For male gospel artists, various combinations of effeminate behavior and attire signified queer sexual desire.

Many scholars have criticized black churches for effectively enacting a don't-ask-don't-tell policy with regards to sexual orientation. A male gospel artist may *demonstrate* transgressive sexual orientation, without penalty or loss of social (and economic) capital in ecclesial spaces, unless he actually v*erbalizes* the outlawed sexual orientation.[345] Ethnomusicologist Alisha Lola

[343] Ibid., 62. Among Pentecostals, to "lay hands" on someone is to physically touch someone with the intention to impart or activate a spiritual gift or blessings. New Testament scriptures referencing this act include Luke 4:40, Acts 8:18, 1 Timothy 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6, and Hebrews 6:2.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Even so, performance communicates identity as equally or more effectively as speaking.

Jones's dissertation "We Are a Peculiar People" critically analyzes the varied masculinities men display in gospel music.[346] She devotes an entire chapter to the work of gospel artist Tonéx, whose career in gospel music suffered when he declared that he was gay during an interview on gospel artist Lexi Allen's television show.[347] Before his revealing interview with Lexi, however, Tonéx was already well known in gospel for his queer gender expressions—including donning straightened hair, wearing a see-through, mesh tank top in a gospel music video, utilizing his vocal range which would rival soprano-singing women, and sporting long hair well before locks had become normative among African American churchgoing men during the last decade.

Jones brings attention to the fact that various performances may be illegible to some audiences.[348] While some gestures and apparel are easily read by churchgoing audiences, some demonstrations of sexualities may go unrecognized. For example, Jones states in a footnote that on one of gospel music's most prominent stages—the Stellar Awards, "[gospel artist Ricky] Dillard used dance moves that closely resemble the 'duckwalk' gestures and movements found in Vogue Femme performances of black gay ballroom voguing culture."[349] *New Yorker* staff

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[346] Jones, "'We Are a Peculiar People': Meaning, Masculinity, and Competence in Gendered Gospel Performance."

[347] lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 1"; lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 2"; lexitelevision, "The Lexi Show (Tonex) Part 3"; Jones, "'We Are a Peculiar People': Meaning, Masculinity, and Competence in Gendered Gospel Performance."

[348] African and African American studies scholar Mark Anthony Neal speaks of the "illegible black masculinities" and the "speculative fiction" that is often projected onto queer black male bodies. Neal, *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities*.

[349] Jones, "'We Are a Peculiar People': Meaning, Masculinity, and Competence in Gendered Gospel Performance," 9. Jones references Ricky Dillard's dancing as captured in the YouTube video: prophetsgirl, "Ricky Dillard & New G Worked It Out (Stellar Awards)," *YouTube.com*, accessed November 30, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONqs-bCsCe4.

writer Kalefa Sanneh also mentions that Dillard's 2008 Stellar Awards dance moves received applause from the live audience, but met criticism online.[350] Churchgoers who were unfamiliar with voguing and/or its origins in gay ballroom dance clubs may not have been able to decode Dillard's movements, just as churchgoers who abstained from popular music would not have been able to recognize popular music in gospel songs. When gospel artists and musicians borrowed chord progressions, melodies, and even whole songs from their secular counterparts, churchgoers may not have realized that the music was transgressive.

Because of the associations made between gender expression and perceived sexuality, to represent gender was to also demonstrate sexuality. The two went hand-in-hand. Gospel front men had the ability to display transgressive sexualities (even if they could not verbally declare them) because of persistent gender disparity in black churches. It is worth noting that many churches, and especially the prominent and megachurches in black American (evangelical) Christendom, had moved toward gender equality. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, ordained its first female Bishop, Vashti McKenzie, in 2000.[351] Yet, at every level of ecclesial polity among black evangelical churches, women were still more likely to be penalized or publicly reprimanded for real or perceived sexual indiscretion than were men; and historically, ecclesial sanctions against women have often been more severe than those exacted upon their male counterparts.

[350] Sanneh, "Profiles: Revelations."

[351] "Meet Our Bishop," accessed March 31, 2017, http://www.10thdistrictame.org/bishop.html.

The classic example was the unwed couple expecting a baby. In the past, the woman could have expected to be publicly rebuked or "sat down," from any leadership position in the church.[352] She could have even been obliged to apologize to the congregation. Her partner, however, may have been "sat down," or may have escaped public reprimand altogether. Megachurch pastors were much more likely to extend grace and care to the couple, in the platinum age, than to openly rebuke "that others may fear."[353]

Conclusion

When the college student commented that Kirk Franklin "sure does move his hips a lot," I was simultaneously tickled and discomfited. Her comment was funny. But, it was also telling. After two decades of studying Franklin's work, I myself, as a gospel musician, and church choir director, and singer, had become used to Franklin's accessible performance style—his energetic antics and relentless referencing of black popular music and dance. Franklin had prioritized and

[352] When a pastor or other ecclesial leader *sits* someone *down*, that someone must suspend activity in leadership role(s) in the church and/or temporarily cease ministry. Effectively, the person is divested of spiritual capital. Ostensibly, during this hiatus, the person who has been "sat down" is rekindling relationship with Christ, regaining discipline, exhibiting piety publicly (and privately), and thereby rebuilding spiritual capital in the church. In one of her Periscope broadcasts, gospel artist Tammi Haddon spoke of the public reprimands that both she and her then boyfriend Gerald Haddon faced from Gerald's father and pastor, when Tammi got pregnant before she and Gerald were married. Gerald Haddon is currently the music director for Mary Mary and brother of national gospel artist and reality TV star Deitrick Haddon. Gerald and Tammi Haddon's single "Awesome God" was released in 2014, while the accompanying album *Us* was released in 2015. Gerald Haddon and Tammi Haddon, *Us*, CD (Pembroke Records, 2015).

[353] It is not uncommon for I Timothy 5:20 to be quoted to explain ecclesial reprimand of any kind. "As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear" (NRSV).

normalized accessible performance *in church*, even though most of his songs were not sung in churches week to week).

Kirk Franklin's rise and sustained success as a gospel artist shaped the generation of gospel artists who followed him. His particular brand of accessible performance became the model for popular culture crossover. Moreover, as the producer and host of *Sunday Best*, cable television network BET's gospel version of the popular competition *American Idol*, Franklin was an indisputable tastemaker in gospel. Yet, for the most part, Franklin's brand of pop-gospel music did not gain centrality in black American Christian worship beyond youth Sundays and other special worship services and liturgical interludes. While Franklin's brand of ministry and marketing was effective in garnering phenomenal record sales, at least during the first half of the platinum age, it is not clear whether such outreach via assimilation to mainstream culture translated to any measurable increase in church memberships. Franklin has definitely taken the gospel to the world in the platinum age; albeit, crossover gospel may have simultaneously diminished the musical and membership prospects of local churches.

Chapter 5
Great God, God's Friends, and the Global Idiom of Crossover Praise and Worship Music

Global Idiom of Praise and Worship Music

A hallmark of the platinum age of gospel music (1993-2013) was contemporary gospel artists' intent to cross over to black popular and white Christian markets. Previous chapters explored black mainstream crossover efforts of gospel artists Kirk Franklin, Mary Mary, and the Winans family. This chapter illumines gospel artists' use of praise and worship as a crossover vehicle to reach white and international Christian audiences. Fred Hammond, Donnie McClurkin, and CeCe Winans were standouts who achieved platinum success with praise and worship albums. Additionally, mixed-race gospel artist Israel Houghton became the exemplar of interracial praise and worship music-making. This chapter will show that after the initial platinum success of Fred Hammond, Donnie McClurkin, and CeCe Winans, the black gospel industry music moved to create praise and worship music with crossover appeal.

This chapter will define praise and worship (P&W) music, chart the emergence of this music among white and then black evangelicals, and, finally, explain how gospel artists Fred Hammond, Donnie McClurkin, and Israel Houghton set the standard for praise and worship crossover.

In the platinum age, gospel artists engaged in what I call the *global idiom* of praise and worship music. The term *global idiom* evokes historian Evelyn Higginbotham's elucidation of

"the vernacular discourses of religion" which black gospel singers and preachers employed in race records during the 1920s and 1930s.[354] Platinum-age gospel artists traded African-American religious vernacular for a global religious idiom that emphasized post-racial identity. In so doing, artists jettisoned the conception of Jesus as a co-suffering savior. Instead, the global idiom of contemporary praise and worship music praised God, rather than Jesus, and emphasized friendship between God and humanity.

This idiom was global in that white American and Australian praise and worship music had become a lingua franca among evangelicals across the globe by the early 1990s. This vernacular was also global in that it encouraged and reified a singular, transnational Christian identity that privileged, intentionally or not, white American and Australian evangelical theology and musical expression. Education scholar Joyce King's conception of "dysconscious racism" is an apt designation for this key byproduct of consistently distributing and marketing white evangelical praise and worship music in countries around the world since the 1970s.[355] In this case, dysconscious racism manifested as both a privileging of American and Australian white evangelical musical expression in churches around the globe, and the "dysconscious" belief across the globe that white praise and worship music was best and/or necessary for encounter

[354] See chapter 3 for the explanation of Higginbotham's article: Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture," 1997.

[355] Joyce King defines *dysconscious racism* as: "a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness (that is, not unconsciousness) but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. Uncritical ways of thinking about racial inequity accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages White people have as a result of subordinating diverse others (Wellman, 1977)." King, "Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers," 135.

with God during corporate worship.[356] In any case, platinum-age gospel artists embraced this global vernacular for ministry and marketing to Christians who were not black.

Praise and Worship in Black White

Before the first decade of gospel's platinum age (1993-2013) ended, gospel artists desiring national and international success were compelled to record either pop-gospel a la Kirk Franklin, God's Property, Yolanda Adams, and Mary Mary, or establish themselves as praise and worship (P&W) artists. Furthermore, to be a P&W artist meant covering white praise and worship music and engaging in performances of accessibility to white Christian audiences, even though it was very difficult for a black gospel artist to break into white Christian markets or get bookings in white churches. To engage in the performance of accessibility is to employ a sophisticated system of behaviors for appeal to and acceptance of a mainstream audience. Previous chapters detailed gospel artists' accessible performances for crossover success in black mainstream markets. This chapter details black gospel artists' efforts for crossover to white and global CCM markets. To appeal to the black mainstream, gospel artists employed: 1) popular music and dance forms; 2) contemporary fashion and status symbols; 3) overt references to popular culture; 4) association with mainstream artists; and 5) conspicuous (hetero)sexuality. On the other hand, to appeal to white Christian audiences and by extension global markets that had already been cultivated by white CCM artists, black gospel artists: 1) recorded covers of

[356] Joyce King defines dysconsciousness as "an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given." Ibid.

Contemporary Christian Music (CCM); 2) utilized post-racial religious discourses in their lyrics and rhetoric; and 3) and traded the conception of Jesus as co-suffering savior for a "great" and "awesome" God.

Gospel artist and producer Fred Hammond worked with CCM industry executives to urbanize white praise and worship in the 1990s. Israel Houghton, who was also one of Hammond's former band members, crossed over to white Christian markets with the urban praise and worship sound Hammond had codified. Israel Houghton demonstrated a rare case of relatively unfettered access to white Christian church platforms while rendering black gospel. Some would suggest that besides his captivating music, he was likely buoyed by his phenotypical ambiguity, former high profile position at the largest megachurch in the USA, and his post-racial vernacular discourses of religion. Donnie McClurkin toured with televangelist Benny Henn, and was a regular host and guest on The Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). BeBe and CeCe Winans began their national careers singing on televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker's *PTL* in the 1980s.[357] BeBe and CeCe Winans, Donnie McClurkin, and Israel Houghton were the models for engaging white Christian markets with black gospel, even if most black P&W artists simply could not make headway in white CCM.[358]

[357] See chapter 1 for a discussion of BeBe and CeCe's work in white Christian music, including their recurring appearances on the1980s flagship Christian television broadcast *PTL.*

[358] There were some black gospel artists who found success in (white) Christian music by establishing themselves as Christian artists, to the near abandonment of black gospel markets. For example, Ron Kenoly, Larnell Harris, Anthony Evans, Mandisa, and Nicole Mullens were well-established Christian artists.

What is Praise and Worship?

Praise and worship is a liturgical practice and music form arising in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s.[359] Ramshaw describes praise and worship songs as music typically employed in evangelical churches "to lead the worshippers through a series of emotions and convictions" in pursuit of "intimacy with God."[360] I go further to define "intimacy with God" as an encounter with Christ that results in revelation from God, or feeling of closeness to God. Thus, praise and worship is not just a type of sacred music, but it is also a worship style with its own set of liturgical rituals.[361] The liturgical act of praise and worship is a transformative experience, and the music is simply a vehicle of transformation.

Understanding Praise and Worship

Across races and denominations, the praise and worship liturgical practice involves much singing and congregational participation. The "praise and worship team," which is usually a group of at least three singers, leads the congregation in singing and corporate acts of praise and worship such as standing, clapping, or dancing. Additionally, there is usually a single "praise and

[359] While some scholars may limit the definition of liturgy to include only the Eucharistic practices of Protestant and Catholic churches, I recognize liturgy's literal definition to be "the work of the people." As such, I define liturgy as the public, corporate worship practices of any church community.

[360] Ramshaw, *Christian Worship*, 134–35.

[361] In *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*, Mark Evans brings attention to the disparate definitions of the terms *worship* and *praise* among Christian communities. In this chapter, I focus on the liturgical practice of praise and worship, or what Evans calls *praise-and-worship style* and its concomitant music. Mark Evans, *Open up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*, Studies in Popular Music (London; Oakville: Equinox, 2006), 378.

worship leader" among the team, who exhorts the congregation during and between songs. Often, visual aids, such as overhead projections of lyrics, are made available to congregants.

Black churches' P&W instrumental accompaniment tends to differ slightly from that of white churches. In black churches, P&W instrumentation usually includes at minimum a keyboard, organ, or piano, and a full drum set. When possible, a full rhythm section (keyboard/organ/piano, drums, and electric bass) or larger instrumental collective assembles. In (white) evangelical settings, the guitar often takes precedence over keyboard instruments.

While recorded praise and worship in the black tradition may contain some complex heterophony and jazz-influenced four- or five-part harmonies, most praise and worship songs can easily be sung in unison and/or with relatively straightforward three- or four-part gospel harmonies of the I, IV, V, and vi chords.

The praise and worship music embraced in black religious culture is usually composed in sectional form, and involves a great deal of repetition. While P&W music in white evangelical congregations often include long verse texts, the tendency in black congregations is to employ songs with less wordy verses, or in the case of covers, eliminate verses altogether. Gospel artist Tasha Cobb's cover of CCM band Jesus Culture's "Break Every Chain" is a prime example of jettisoning long verses. Likewise, gospel artist Jonathan Nelson's version (2008) of CCM singer-songwriter Chris Tomlin's "How Great Is Our God" (2004) skips the opening verse. While some may consider black churches' P&W songs too simplistic and repetitive, the effective employment of repetition in these songs leaves space for musical and lyrical improvisation, and aids in the transformative process that defines praise and worship.

Praise and Worship Lyrics

There are three major themes that pervade praise and worship song texts. The texts tend to: 1) praise God, or celebrate the perfect attributes of God; 2) give thanks for God's blessings; and/or 3) encourage the participant-listener to worship, or adore and reverence God. The texts of praise and worship songs focus on God's perfection, and the participant-listener's response to God's grace in personal devotion or in public worship.[362] When asked to describe the difference between praise and worship music and "older, more traditional gospel music," P&W recording artist Ron Kenoly stated, "Praise and worship music is music unto God. It's to God. It's vertical. Whereas the rest of it is all horizontal: It's [P&W is] all about God."[363] Kenoly's reference to "vertical" communication implies that God is above humanity. Humanity sings and prays up to God, and God graciously descends from God's high place to commune with humanity. Conversely, horizontal communication takes place between and among earthborn persons. While I dare not describe *every* P&W song as vertical communication to God, the *act* of praise and worship is meant to effect the transformative process of moving closer to God. Thus, even when a particular song is not vertical, the practice of P&W still is.

During the platinum age, the motif of celebrating humanity's relationship with God gained great popularity. Praise and worship songs often described God as father, healer, protector, or provider, and they likewise described God as "awesome," "great," "amazing," and

[362] The religious discourse of praise and worship takes the focus off of humanity's imperfections, and instead emphasizes God's perfection.

[363] Richard Scheinin, "He Sings His Praise unto God / Ron Kenoly Is the 'Ambassador of Music,'" *Houston Chronicle*, February 21, 1998, sec. Religion.

"mighty." One could argue that these themes were consistent with protestant hymn texts through the centuries. I make mention of these themes, however, because normally, the transformative process of praise and worship tended to exclusively employ songs with these themes.

White Evangelical Praise and Worship History

Scholars and practitioners have tied the rise of white evangelical praise and worship music to the emergence of the Jesus Movement and more specifically to Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California—a church at the center of the Movement.[364] During the 1960s, many hippies were turning to Christianity to answer their unsatisfied spiritual longings. At that time, Chuck Smith was an evangelist reaching the remnant of hippies remaining on the Southern California beaches, and he founded Calvary Chapel to minister to this population.[365]

Subsequently, musicians at the church composed "Jesus music" and Pastor Smith welcomed the new musical interventions in Calvary Chapel's worship services. The new hippies-turned-Christians did not leave the music of the hippie culture behind. Instead, they created new Christian lyrics to go with the musical forms that had come to symbolize the hippie movement. Redman states:

> It was a new kind of music that emerged from that free and experimental season. For lack of better terms, people called it "contemporary" and referred to established musical styles as "traditional." This CWM [Contemporary Worship Music] was shaped by rock and pop music. Not surprisingly, African-American

[364] Redman, "Welcome to the Worship Awakening"; Evans, *Open up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*; Michael S. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat out the Organ in the Worship Wars," *Christianity Today* 43, no. 8 (1999): 28–32; Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*.

[365] Webber, "Praise and Worship Music," 21.

> worship styles were very influential on early CWM, just as Black artists influenced the development of early rock and roll.[366]

In 1971, Pastor Smith founded the Maranatha! Music record company to publish his church members' compositions, especially those of the church's pioneering praise and worship band Love Song.[367] Maranatha! Music was among the early recorders of P&W music, and evangelicals of various denominations, races, and ethnicities around the world circulated Maranatha!'s music on tape. Webber credits Maranatha! Music with starting the Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) industry.[368] Liesch contends, however, that Jesus music "came into its own" with the national success of black gospel artist Edwin Hawkins' "Oh Happy Day."[369]

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[366] Redman, "Welcome to the Worship Awakening," 380.

[367] The term *Maranatha!* occurs in 1 Cor 16:22; the word is of Aramaic origin and is translated as "Our Lord Come!" (NRSV) or the Aramaic may be translated "Our Lord has come!" See "1 Corinthians 16:22 - NRS - Let Anyone Be Accursed Who Has No Love for the ...," *Bible Study Tools*, accessed October 23, 2016, http://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/1-corinthians/16-22.html; "Blue Letter Bible - Lexicon," *BlueLetterBible.org*, accessed October 22, 2016, https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3134&t=RSV.

Hamilton marks 1973 as the starting year for Maranatha! Music, but the Maranatha! Music website marks 1971 as the starting year. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs," 32; "About Maranatha Music," *Maranatha! Music*, accessed October 23, 2016, https://www.maranathamusic.com/about-us; Webber, "Praise and Worship Music," 21. Founding Love Song band member Tommy Coomes also says Maranatha! Music formed in 1971. Bob Darden, "Maranatha!," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, September 1991, 11.

[368] Webber, "Praise and Worship Music," 22. In a previous section, I have recounted the history of praise and worship music among evangelicals. Authors such as Robert Redman and Barry Liesch make it clear that African American gospel music and corporate worship practices influenced white evangelical praise and worship from its earliest stages of development.

[369] Barry Wayne Liesch, *The New Worship: Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 7. It is worth noting that while Edwin Hawkins was an African American Pentecostal, "Oh Happy Day" is not usually considered a P&W song in African American churches today. I have never witnessed it used as a song for devotion or praise and worship in black Pentecostal churches; it would have simply been a gospel-choir song.

Influenced by the "evangelical seeker-service movement" of the 1980s, white mainline churches began to embrace P&W music and the "charismatic praise-and-worship movement."[370] Redman describes the seeker-service movement as driven by megachurches, and designed to cater to baby boomers. The worship environment was stripped of as much potentially offensive or overly "religious" iconography as possible, while bands played Contemporary Christian songs. Furthermore, seeker services could include CCM songs with positive, inspirational lyrics, *and* they could include popular secular songs containing lyrics related to the worship service's theme for the day. Redman states that, "Seeker churches overhauled the content of the service… replacing the start-stop, stand up-sit down, traditional Protestant liturgy with a simpler and more fluid order that stressed thematic unity and seamless transitions between elements."[371]

Whereas seeker services were considered radical departures from traditional mainline liturgies, charismatic P&W services sought to adapt the traditional mainline liturgies for the contemporary times. Again, African American musical influence was evident. Redman explains that in the Charismatic praise-and-worship service, "singing, led by a worship leader, a band with a small ensemble of singers, and often a choir as well, [was] modeled on the gospel choir in African-American churches."[372]

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[370] For explanation of the terms "charismatic" and "mainline," or more explanation of denominational differences, see Ramshaw, *Christian Worship*; Walton, *Watch This!*, 283; Billingsley, *It's a New Day: Race and Gender in the Modern Charismatic Movement*, 202.

[371] Redman, "Welcome to the Worship Awakening," 371.

[372] Redman, "Welcome to the Worship Awakening," 376.

While one or two songs in any given P&W service may have been from traditional Protestant hymnody, most songs conformed to praise and worship lyrical and musical typology. Ultimately, mainline churches began to embrace the practice and music of praise and worship. Furthermore, Redman points out that churches with P&W services were "among the most racially and socially diverse congregations in North America.[373] But, how have black churches come to so widely participate in praise and worship? How did the Jesus music of the hippie Christians influence black churches?

African American Praise and Worship History

Although praise and worship has been a familiar part of African American church culture since the 1990s, the history of African American praise and worship has been given little scholarly attention until very recently. Most of the scholarly writing on praise and worship covers white evangelical practices, opposed to the common practices among black churches. Even liturgist Melva Costen's *In Spirit and in Truth: The Music of African American Worship* (2004) and her updated *African American Christian Worship* (2007) do not specifically treat praise and worship music found in black churches.[374] Moreover, while Los Angeles is considered a significant hub of early (1980s and 1990s) black praise and worship, black gospel music ethnomusicologist Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje's article "Gospel Music in the Los Angeles Black Community: A Historical Overview" (1989), which spans 1930-1970, pre-dates the West

[373] Ibid., 379.

[374] Costen, *In Spirit and in Truth: The Music of African American Worship*; Costen, *African American Christian Worship*.

Angeles COGIC church's seminal praise and worship recordings.[375] Jean Kidula's chapter in *California Soul*, called "The Gospel of Andrae Crouch: A Black Angeleno," describes Andraé Crouch as "very active in the Jesus Movement," but Kidula does not directly address praise and worship among black churches.[376]

Scholarship on African American P&W has surged in the last few years. Gospel announcer and scholar Deborah Smith Pollard's chapter on praise and worship in *When the Church Becomes Your Party* adds much to the academic discourse.[377] Pollard dedicates a full chapter to the twofold phenomenon of praise and worship liturgy and music in what she calls the "urban church."[378] Pollard provides historical background for present-day African American praise and worship, and she details P&W practices as effected in African American churches in and around the city of Detroit, MI. Ethnomusicologist Birgitta Johnson has also written extensively about black praise and worship in Los Angeles in articles and her dissertation "'Oh,

[375] DjeDje's later compilation *California Soul* (1998) does not attend to gospel music either. Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje, "Gospel Music in the Los Angeles Black Community: A Historical Overview," *Black Music Research Journal* 9 (1989): 35–79; Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje and Eddie S Meadows, eds., *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[376] Jean Kidula, "The Gospel of Andrae Crouch: A Black Angeleno," in *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West*, ed. Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje and Eddie S. Meadows, vol. 1, Music of the African Diaspora Series (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 301.

[377] Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*.

[378] Ibid.

For A Thousand Tongues to Sing.'"[379] Pollard and Johnson have begun to mine the depth of African American praise and worship.

From Devotion to P&W—Old Format, New Music

To be sure, contemporary praise and worship liturgical practice can be viewed as a revision of older corporate worship practices in African American evangelical churches. Pollard explains that the liturgical practice called "devotion" or "devotional" has long been a standard part of African American Protestant worship. Pollard cites Walter Pitts's *Old Ship of Zion* (1993) in which Pitts ethnographically describes devotional service practices of a black Baptist churches.[380] While I do not agree with Pitts's main thesis that Afro-Baptist churches employed a liturgy that was binary in structure, I do find that his ethnographic study showed black Baptist liturgy was a type of transformative process. In this respect, P&W is in line with older Baptist worship practices. I have also observed that prior to P&W's liturgical preeminence, the devotional format in black Pentecostal churches usually included a devotional leader or team who would alternate leading songs during the devotional period. (That period could last anywhere from five to thirty minutes or even longer.) Devotion usually included an opening

[379] Johnson, "'Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing'"; Birgitta Johnson, "Back to the Heart of Worship: Praise and Worship Music in a Los Angeles African-American Megachurch," *Black Music Research Journal* 31 (2011): 105–29; Johnson, "'This Is Not the Warm-Up Act!'"

[380] While Pollard references Walter Pitts's ethnographic study of the devotional practices of an "Afro-Baptist church," a broader comparative study of past and continuing African American devotional practices across denominations would greatly add to the discussion of African American P&W history. Walter F. Pitts, *Old Ship of Zion: The Afro-Baptist Ritual in the African Diaspora*, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Pollard, *When the Church Become Your Party*, 20–24.

prayer, and songs for congregational singing of some combination of hymns and slow and fast spirituals, as well as other works that facilitated congregational singing.[381]

In the early years of gospel's platinum age (1993-2013), praise and worship was a relatively new and burgeoning form of congregational singing in black churches. As late as 1995, it was not common for churches to have praise teams. In Pentecostal/Apostolic/Holiness spaces, it was still very common for the beginning of church services to include congregational songs, or fast-tempo, call-and-response songs in which the congregation repeated a line or two in response to a lead vocalist's antiphonal calls:

> Lead: Crying oh, heaven
> Congregation: Heaven is mine
> Lead: Crying oh, heaven,
> Congregation: Heaven is mine
> Lead: Heaven is a holy place!
> Congregation: Heaven is mine
> Lead: Heaven is a holy place
> Congregation: Heaven is mine

Some of these congregational songs were descendants of slave spirituals; some may have actually been sung by enslaved Christians before emancipation.[382]

After the devotional, the worship service could include selections by a gospel choir, during which the congregation was encouraged and expected to participate. The following table (Table 5.1) outlines similarities between evangelical P&W liturgy, and the devotional practices

[381] It could be argued that at least in Pentecostal churches, the movement from devotional to praise and worship took much music-making power from congregants in the pews and centralized it in the voices of the praise and worship team--especially the worship leader. In devotional, congregants had the opportunity to lead and start songs, or even exhort the congregation through testimonials. With praise and worship, the power to introduce or lead a song rests with the worship team.

[382] Baptist and Methodist churches placed greater emphasis on singing hymns than did the Pentecostal churches that I observed.

in African American churches that preceded the emergence of contemporary African American evangelical P&W liturgy.

Table 5.1 Devotional and Praise and Worship Comparison

African American Pentecostal Devotional	African American Evangelical Praise and Worship	White Evangelical Praise and Worship
The period at the beginning of the service is dedicated to congregational singing in order to focus on God and move toward encounter with Christ	In general, the same type of practice is employed.	In general, the same type of practice is employed, except in Vineyard Church which places P&W at the end of the service.
Liturgy includes multiple songs that employ call/response or short repeatable phrases.	Many songs employ short repeatable phrases.	While songs may employ short repeatable phrases, long verse texts are common.
The minimum desired instrumentation is organ/keyboard/piano and drums.	The minimum desired instrumentation is organ/keyboard/piano and drums.	Minimum desired instrumentation is guitar or keyboard.
Worship service is driven by music (from starting devotional to choral selections to musicality in preaching to singing during altar call, invitation, and offering, to benedictory congregational song). Music weaves the whole service together.	Worship service is driven by music (from starting P&W to choral selections to musicality in preaching to singing during altar-call, invitation, and offering, to benedictory congregational song). Music weaves the whole service together.	P&W is an important part of the service, but music does not necessarily permeate every aspect of the service.

Rise of Black Praise and Worship Music—Crossing over from White Christian to Black Gospel, and Back Again

Praise and worship gained popularity in white evangelical churches during the 1970s, during which time gospel artist Andraé Crouch toured with Jesus-music musicians and

singers.[383] By 1981, the predominately white Gospel Music Association had identified praise and worship as its own category for Dove Awards, Christian music's highest honors besides the Grammies. Yet, it took some time before white evangelical P&W caught on in black churches. It was not until the late 1990s that P&W was a familiar part of African American church culture, replacing traditional devotional music in black churches across the country.

West Angeles Church of God In Christ

In the early 1980s, West Angeles COGIC was the first black church to produce an entire album of praise and worship music with any type of widespread circulation around the country. Worship leader Judith Christie McAllister was instrumental in the development of praise and worship prior to and during her tenure as minister of music at West Angeles COGIC.[384]

Pollard rightly points out that praise and worship in African American churches can easily be traced to the practice of "devotional" singing. Yet, Pollard's focus on Detroit detracts attention from the impact that Pentecostal artists in Los Angeles, CA, were having on the dissemination of praise and worship music in African American churches. Pentecostal churches have long been musical innovators among African American Protestants. For this reason, it is no surprise that West Angeles COGIC, in Los Angeles, was one of the early churches to take praise and worship music from white evangelical churches to African American churches across the United States. As previously stated, Pastor Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel was leading the way in praise and worship among white evangelical churches. Some eighteen years later, Bishop

[383] See chapter 1 for more on Andraé Crouch. Refer to those chapter 2 for more explanation of praise and worship.

[384] Johnson, "'Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,'" 300–302.

Charles Blake's West Angeles COGIC choir was introducing the white evangelical style of praise and worship music to black church audiences. West Angeles proclaims of itself:

> Over the years West Angeles has revolutionized the Black Church by committing to a unique style of worship. This style can be seen in the form of several trail-blazing albums appropriately titled, Saints in Praise: Vol. I, Vol. II, Vol. III, and Little Saints in Praise [*sic*]. These unique forms of worship originated first in this county [*sic*] and quickly spread throughout Europe.[385]

West Angeles Church of God In Christ Mass Choir and Congregation recorded *Saints in Praise, Volume I*, in 1989.[386] The *Volume II* recording followed in 1990.[387] Both albums included a mix of traditional Pentecostal congregational songs with songs taken from the Maranatha! Publishing catalog.

West Angeles Church of God In Christ, pastored by COGIC's Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake Sr., proclaimed on its website that it "revolutionized" worship in black churches by introducing praise and worship.[388] West Angeles COGIC's brand of P&W music, with its klezmer inflections, was initially recognizable but not immediately catching on in African

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[385] "Music & Worship Arts – West Angeles Church," accessed October 23, 2016, http://westa.org/music-worship-arts-2/.

[386] "West Angeles Church of God in Christ Mass Choir - Saints in Praise, Vol. 1 CD Album," accessed October 23, 2016, http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?pid=1250739&style=music&fulldesc=T.

[387] "West Angeles Cogic Mass Choir & Congregation - Saints in Praise, Vol. 2 CD Album," accessed October 23, 2016, http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?pid=1766229&style=music&fulldesc=T.

[388] "Music & Worship Arts – West Angeles Church." In a voice recording attributed to Bishop Blake, he also states that West Angeles COGIC was "pioneering" in praise and worship. Henry Nettles, "A Message to Every YOUNG ADULT from One of the Greatest Christian Leaders in the World.," *YouTube.com*, March 2, 2014, accessed May 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfu6knegPLQ.

American churches.[389] If West Angeles and Judith McCallister cracked the door open for praise and worship in black American churches, then Fred Hammond knocked the door down.

Fred Hammond

Detroit native and gospel music trailblazer Fred Hammond began his professional gospel career as a bass player for the Winans, who were also from Detroit. Hammond left the Winans to form his own all-male bleeding-edge gospel group Commissioned. Commissioned early hits included "Running Back to You," "Ordinary Just Won't Do," and "King of Glory." After much success and disagreement about the direction of the group, Hammond decided to leave the group he founded, in order to "start a choir."[390] Of his departure from Commissioned, Hammond said:

> I just left to do a choir. I did tell the guys [members of Commissioned]—a couple—several of them—that we should go in the praise and worship direction. But there really was no direction to go in.[391]

Hammond charted new paths in praise and worship music among black congregations. At the time, Hammond did not see any other artist or ministry providing clear direction for this subgenre in black gospel music. He felt positioned to trail blaze, and he did just that. He was the architect behind the Motor City Mass Choir, which recorded a number of gospel albums. He also produced for pastor and gospel choir director Hezekiah Walker. Wanting to work with a smaller group that he could travel more easily with, Hammond founded the ensemble Radical for Christ. The group's name reflected both how Hammond viewed Christ's ministry, and how he saw

[389] Hammond, interview.

[390] Ibid.

[391] Ibid.

himself modeling that ministry. He had a different expression of worship that he was not seeing in black churches at that time. (While he had heard of Judy McCallister and her work at West Angeles COGIC, he stated that had never witnessed the music ministry of McCallister and her team.) Hammond and Radical for Christ (RFC) released the groundbreaking CD *The Inner Court* in 1995. Hammond released his platinum-selling double-disk album *Pages of Life I & II* in 1998.[392]

Fred Hammond's Urban Gospel

By 1985, Maranatha! Music held a great share of the praise and worship music market.[393] Yet, two men, with a vision for direct response marketing of P&W music, started a music series called Hosanna! Music. Eventually the two men, Ed Lindquist and Mike Coleman, named their company Integrity Music. Lindquist and Coleman had a vision to take praise and worship music, or music for congregational use in church, directly to Christian consumers. The Hosanna! line targeted 42-year-olds, while the Alleluia! line targeted 30-year-olds.[394]

Integrity took interest in developing praise and worship music that black churches would be excited to use in their worship services. They began to develop a roster of African American praise and worship artists, including Ron Kenoly, Bishop T.D. Jakes, and Fred Hammond. In 1998, Vice President of Music for Integrity, Danny McGuffey stated:

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[392] Hammond and Radical For Christ, *Pages of Life - Chapters I & II*.

[393] Bob Darden, "Integrity Music Turns a Niche into a Canyon," *Rejoice! The Gospel Music Magazine*, Fall 1990, 17.

[394] Ibid., 18.

> Part of our mission statement is to create an alliance with ministries and help them fulfill their mission by doing the products that we do. So we've done that with T.D. Jakes and Fred Hammond; and found that after releasing several albums to the community at large- what Fred has done is taken our material and copyrights and repurpose them for the African American community-people are saying, "we want more of this."[395]

Fred Hammond took white praise and worship tunes and texts, and rearranged the music to produce *urban* praise and worship for black churches. Gospel music reporter Teresa Harris stated the following about gospel artist Fred Hammond in a 1998 *Gospel Industry Today* article about his *Pages of Life* album:

> Hammond feels that the growth of gospel music is due to trends that extend throughout today's popular culture. "I've been around for twenty years! I think [gospel music] is getting more competitive. The lyrics are staying stable, but it's becoming more popular in our culture. Young people are choosing to buy gospel. Gospel is now, cool. It's got the same flavor as other music young people like."[396]

Hammond helped white praise and worship music publisher Integrity crossover to black gospel markets. And, Hammond's band member Israel Houghton would soon cross back over to white Christian markets with the urban P&W sound Hammond developed.

Israel Houghton

While there have always been black artists who have been able to find success in the Christian music world, few seem to traverse the Christian and gospel music boundaries in the seemingly effortless and unpretentious way that Israel Houghton did. Houghton co-founded the group of singers and musicians New Breed, with his then wife, Meleasa, to (in his own words)

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[395] Harris, "Top Ten Labels: New Moves for '99," 15.

[396] Teresa E. Harris, "Fred Hammond Between The Pages: Urban Praise & Worship, a Style Born out of Obedience," *Gospel Industry Today*, May 1998, 12.

"create music that breaks down barriers and defies categorization."[397] Houghton also served as a worship leader at Lakewood Church, in Houston, Texas, a megachurch pastored by Televangelist Joel Osteen. In 2011 (and 2009) Lakewood was considered to be the largest church in the USA with more than 43,500 people in attendance each week.[398] Israel Houghton and New Breed expanded African American gospel music by introducing a post-racial discourse that had historically not been part of black gospel music. While this post-racial discourse did not result in platinum sales for Houghton, he did cross over to white CCM markets and achieved gold-certified sales (500,000 units sold) in the process.[399]

Houghton did not have the typical upbringing of a black gospel artist. His biological father was black and his mother was white. He was raised in a white family, living in a Latino neighborhood, and attending a Latino church. This undoubtedly helped Houghton flow effortlessly among music genres. For example, his album, The Power of One, peaked on the Billboard charts at #1 Gospel Album, #1 Christian Album, #19 Digital Album, and #34 Album.[400]

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[397] Israel Houghton, *A Deeper Level* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2007), 158. Israel Houghton does not desire to limit himself to one particular kind of gospel music. In a phone interview I conducted with Houghton, he adamantly emphasized his intentionality in creating music that is not easily categorized. I apologized to him, and said that our job as academicians is to define categories and say how people do and do not fit into them.

[398] Kent Shaffer, "Top 70 Largest Gigachurches in America (2011 Edition)," 2011, accessed March 25, 2017. Originally accessed December 21, 2009. Last accessed March 25, 2017.

[399] To achieve gold-certified sales was also a great feat in gospel's platinum age.

[400] "Israel Houghton Billboard Charts, December 21, 2009," *Billboard.com*, accessed December 21, 2009, http://www.billboard.com/#/artist/israel-houghton/chart-history/568768.Houghton has also won Grammies for Best Pop/Contemporary Gospel Album" for *The Power of One*, "Best Pop/Contemporary

Table 5.2 Selected Israel Houghton Discography

Year	Album	Label
1997	*Whisper it Loud*	Warner
2001	*Neueva Generacion*	Integrity
2001	*New Season*	Integrity
2002	*Real*	Integrity
2004	*Live From Another Level*	Integrity
2005	*Alive in South Africa*	Integrity
2006	*A Timeless Christmas*	Integrity
2009	*The Power of One*	Integrity/Columbia
2010	*Love God, Love People*	Integrity/Columbia
2012	*Decade*	Integrity
2012	*Jesus at the Center/Live*	Integrity/Columbia

On race records (1920s and 1930s), Black preachers drew from the black vernacular to speak of justice, race-relations, and moral order; likewise, singers communicated similar doctrines through metaphors drawn from everyday life of the black working-class.[401] On the other hand, Houghton used contemporary black vernacular to promote post-racialism. Houghton also went a step further to proffer a language of worship which was not necessarily drawn from black working-class culture—a global idiom which could speak to all people without regard to race, class, or denomination. Houghton's religious discourses of post-racial global religiosity were part of his larger accessible performance to Christian audiences outside black churches.

Gospel Album" for *A Deeper Level*, "Best Traditional Gospel Album" for *Alive In South Africa*, and "Best Pop/Contemporary Gospel Album" for *Love God, Love People*.

[401] Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture," 1997, 170–71.

Post-Racial Praise and Worship

I use law professor Sumi Cho's definition of post-racialism as a starting point in my discussion of Israel Houghton's post-racial lyricism. Cho defines post-racialism as "a twenty-first-century ideology that reflects a belief that due to the significant racial progress that has been made, the state need not engage in race-based decision-making or adopt race-based remedies, and that civil society should eschew race as a central organizing principle of social action."[402] She goes on to describe post-racialism more simply as a "retreat from race" authorized by "a racially transcendent event."[403]

While Cho is specifically dealing with legal, political, and intellectual post-racialism, I am suggesting that Houghton engaged in a religious post-racialism. In this religious, or more specifically, Christian context, one can consider the state to be God's Kingdom, or the entire earth, which belongs to God. Houghton's religious discourse argued for a retreat from race in light of the transcendent work of God's gracious love. The expansion of God's kingdom, the acts of loving God and people, and even the liturgical act of praise and worship were all the social actions needed to solve the world's problems. Furthermore, all of these acts were deeply spiritual and unraced.

Houghton expanded contemporary gospel music through post-racial religious discourse in his P&W music in two key ways: 1) he established the transformative experience that is praise and

[402] Sumi Cho, "Post-Racialism," *Iowa Law Review* 94, no. 5 (July 2009): 1594.

[403] Cho even says, "Racial inequities that post-racialists admit still exist—if unaddressed by universal reforms—find remedy in self-help and self-discipline along the lines Bill Cosby urges." Ibid., 1597.

worship as post-racial; and 2) he emphasized that human beings are friends of God rather than that Jesus is a friend to humanity.

Post-Racial Transformation:

Well before President Barack Obama downplayed the importance of race during his 2008 presidential campaign, Israel Houghton downplayed race in his lyrics and rhetoric on his double-CD album *Live From Another Level* (2004), which was released by Integrity Media. This post-racial positioning was evidenced in his song "I Hear the Sound." Houghton's "I Hear the Sound" began with two repeatable sections over a contemporary gospel groove.

> I hear the sound of the new breed
> Marching toward the gates of the enemy
>
> We're armed and dangerous
> Strong and serious
> clothed in righteousness
> It's a new breed a new breed

In the two opening sections, Houghton used military imagery, which was not unusual in gospel. Military themes have long been a part of gospel music. Even in the early 1900s Bishop Charles Mason was singing, "I'm a Soldier in the Army of the Lord."[404]

The lyrics that explicitly downplayed race in a third section of the song *were* unusual. In this case, Houghton used black vernacular diction when he pronounced the word "thing" as "thang" in the chant:

> It ain't a black thing
> it ain't a white thing
> it ain't a color thing
> it's a kingdom thing

[404] Boyer, *How Sweet the Sound: The Golden Age of Gospel*, 22–23.

It is important to note that post-racialism is not merely thinking that race does not exist. Instead, post-racialism is retreating from race, or believing that race no longer matters because something else has positively transcended race. Houghton was saying that race or color did not matter because the establishment of God's kingdom or the experience of God's love transcends race.

To be clear, African American Christians have long since been champions of transcending race, both in rhetoric and gospel music. Still, gospel music simultaneously contained a subtly racialized discourse that proffered Jesus Christ as one who sees African Americans, suffers alongside African Americans, and ultimately delivers African Americans from race-based suffering. It was not the mere presence of post-racial discourse, but rather the absence of racialized context, that distinguished Houghton's lyrics and rhetoric.

Emphasizing Humanity's Friendship with God

Houghton emphasized humanity's friendship with God, and this discourse of humanity as "friends of God" rather than Jesus as "my friend" was new to black gospel music. Houghton supported his friendship-with-God imagery with biblical texts. In the *Live From Another Level* insert, the Christian Bible text James 2:23 is listed to corroborate the "Friend of God" lyrics.[405] James 2:23 states that Abraham was called the friend of God:

> Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. (NRSV)

The same song also evokes Psalm 8:4 (NRSV), which states, "what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" The chorus of the song "Friend of God" drove home the theology through repetition.

[405] Israel Houghton and New Breed, *Live from Another Level*, CD, 2004.

Verse
Who am I that you [God] are mindful of me?
That you hear me, when I call?
Is it true that you are thinking of me?
How You love me!
It's amazing!

[Chorus]
I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
He calls me friend.[406]

I am making a clear distinction between Houghton's friend, which is *God*, and the friend that one has in *Jesus*, as traditionally described in gospel music. Jesus is not so much a buddy, as he is a confidant and deliverer. This is evident in James Cleveland's rendition of the classic Sanctified congregational song "Can't Nobody Do me like Jesus."[407] The lyrics state "Can't nobody do me like Jesus, He's my friend." The singer is declaring that in Jesus's salvific work, Jesus "picked me up and turned me around" on whatever wrong path the singer may have been following. This song was a classic congregational song in black churches for decades, and the lyrics were recycled in other songs. Now, the vernacular discourse that "Jesus is my friend" was being replaced by Houghton's declaration that "I am a friend of God."

Johnson Oatman Jr.'s hymn "No, Not One" and Joseph M. Scriven's "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" are also familiar hymns in African American churches. In the context of African

[406] Ibid.

[407] At the beginning of this Youtube.com clip, James Cleveland states that he heard the song "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus" in a "Sanctified," or Pentecostal church. Pannellctp Traditional Gospel Music, "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus," *YouTube.com*, November 18, 2010, accessed March 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBK9np69W3A. This clip is likely taken from the concert recording: David Leivick and Frederick A. Ritzenberg, *Gospel*, DVD (Monterey Video, 2002).

American churches, these types of hymns usually evoke images of Jesus as humble servant who commiserates with African American suffering. Jesus will show up to rescue those who suffer and save people from paths of destruction.

Houghton and New Breed sing portions of both these hymns in their "Friend Medley" on the *Live From Another Level* recording. Houghton places the "Friend Medley" as the last of a number of consecutive selections that celebrate Houghton's post-racial discourse of humanity as friends of God. Houghton orders the album's tracks to facilitate a transformative worship experience. "I Hear the Sound" establishes a post-racial context, preparing the way for the friend motif. Then, a series of songs about friendship with God follow. The messages of post-racial spiritual transformation and friendship with God go hand in hand. A full third of the album's tracks feature post-racial or friendship discourses (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Post-Racialism and Friendship with God in Houghton's *Live From Another Level* album.

Track	Song Title	Discourse/Praise & Worship Phase
Disc 1		
1	Come In From The Outside	Moving from Outer Court to Inner Court
2	Again I Say Rejoice	Praise
3	Again I Say Rejoice (Reprise)	Praise
4	We Win	Praise
5	All Around	Praise
6	You've Made Me Glad/Who Is Like The Lord?	Praise
7	I Hear The Sound	Post-Racialism
8	Spoken Word by Bishop Garlington	God's Friend
9	Medley: So Easy To Love You/Friend Of God	God's Friend
Disc 2		
1	Friend of God	God's Friend

Table 5.3 (Continued)

Track	Song Title	Discourse/Praise & Worship Phase
2	Spontaneous Worship	God's Friend, Worship
3	Friend	God's Friend
4	Friend Medley: Joy Of My Desire/No Not One/What A Friend We Have In Jesus	God's Friend
5	Rise Within Us/Another Breakthrough	Worship
6	Another Breakthrough	Response to Encounter with God
7	Lord of The Breakthrough	Response to Encounter with God
8	Breathe Into Me	Response to Encounter with God & Worship
9	Awesome Medley	Multi-Lingual Worship
10	Medley: Here I Am To Worship/You Are Good	Worship
11	Holy	Worship
12	Going to Another Level	Response to Encounter with God

Because Houghton has already established a discourse that downplays race, the two aforementioned hymns in the "Friend Medley" lack the undertone of friendship with Jesus in the midst of race-based suffering. Friendship with God replaces friendship with Jesus and the concomitant deliverance from racialized suffering. In this way, Houghton's post-racial and friendship discourses were accessible to Christian listeners outside of black church culture even as his lyrics moved away from African American sociohistorical evocations.

Donnie McClurkin's Bilateral Accessible Performance

Donnie McClurkin has parlayed his singing success into a multifaceted, faith-based media career. Beyond recording gospel, McClurkin is a nationally syndicated gospel radio personality, and has been a fixture on Christian Network TBN as a host, interviewer, and singer. His movie appearances include a role in Tyler Perry's *Diary of A Mad Black Woman,* as well as

a role in *The Gospel*. He has also served as a judge on cable network BET's singing competition *Sunday Best* since its third season.

McClurkin claimed The Church of God In Christ (Pentecostal) as part of his religious heritage, and his maternal grandmother was a preacher in a Holiness church.[408] Furthermore, McClurkin often used the word "Holiness" to describe the type of disciplined lifestyle that every Christian should live.[409] Like many acclaimed gospel artists before him, McClurkin had taken on the work of pastoring. He officially founded Perfecting Faith Church in 2001 and began broadcasting his sermons in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey in 2009.[410] By 2010, his church numbered at least twenty-seven hundred members, and his Word Network telecast was reaching two hundred countries around the world.[411]

In order to understand McClurkin's theology and doctrine, I observed the October 5, 2010 – November 23, 2010 telecasts of his weekly television program *Perfecting Your Faith*. Additionally, I used as primary sources his autobiography *Eternal Victim / Eternal Victor,* and

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[408] "The Donnie McClurkin Show," accessed October 12, 2010, http://donnieradio.com/; McClurkin, *Eternal Victim/Eternal Victor*, 16.

[409] Consequently, I use the terms "Pentecostal," "traditional Pentecostal," and "Holiness" interchangeably in with regard to Donnie McClurkin. See chapter 2 for more discussion of Pentecostal and Holiness traditions.

[410] "About Perfecting Faith Church," accessed December 4, 2010, http://perfectingfaith.org/about.htm; "Donnie McClurkin Launches New Television Show | SoulTracks - Soul Music Biographies, News and Reviews," accessed December 5, 2010, http://www.soultracks.com/story-mcclurkin-television.

[411] The article, dated May 2009, declares the membership to be 2,700 and growing. "Donnie McClurkin Launches New Television Show | SoulTracks - Soul Music Biographies, News and Reviews." Telecast information found at "TV Schedule," accessed December 8, 2010, http://thewordnetwork.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=27.

his solo album recordings *Live in London and More…* (2000), *Again* (2003), *Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs* (2005), and *We All Are One (Live in Detroit)* (2008).[412]

Donnie McClurkin performed accessibility for both black mainstream and white Christian audiences. He downplayed race and denomination, and he recorded covers of CCM P&W songs, thereby making himself appealing to Christian audiences outside of black churches. Further, in his performance of accessibility to black mainstream audiences, McClurkin: 1) recorded covers of popular music 2) relished in status symbols; 3) made overt references to popular culture; 4) associated himself with mainstream artists and entertainers, and 5) made great pronouncements of heterosexuality.[413]

Theorizing Black P&W Artists' Crossover Efforts

Donnie McClurkin performed accessibility for both black popular, and white and global Christian consumers. Sociologist of religion Peter Berger argues in his book *The Sacred Canopy* that denominationalism has resulted in a religious pluralism within Christianity, in which different churches must compete for "clientele." Moreover, in secular society, churches are competing for allegiance not only against other churches, but also against other religious and secular institutions and ideologies. Berger states:

> The key characteristic of all pluralistic situations, whatever the details of their historical background, is that the religious ex-monopolies can no longer take for granted the allegiance of their client populations. Allegiance is voluntary and

[412] McClurkin, *Eternal Victim/Eternal Victor*; Donnie McClurkin, *Live in London and More...*, CD (Verity Records, 2000); Donnie McClurkin, *Again*, CD (Verity Records, 2003); Donnie McClurkin, *Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs*, CD (Verity Records, 2005); Donnie McClurkin, *We All Are One (Live in Detroit)*, CD (Verity Records, 2008).

[413] See chapter 3 for more on *performance of accessibility*. See chapter 4 for more on McClurkin's expression of sexuality.

> thus, by definition, less than certain. As a result, the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be *marketed.* It must be "sold" to a clientele that is no longer constrained to "buy." The pluralistic situation is, above all, a *market situation*. In it, the religious institutions become marketing agencies and the religious traditions become consumer commodities. And at any rate a good deal of religious activity in this situation comes to be dominated by the logic of market economics. (Emphasis is Berger's.)[414]

Media studies scholar Mara Einstein further argues that the secularization of American society has forced churches and/or Christian ministries to compete for consumers. In her book *Brands of Faith*, Einstein brings attention to the calculated efforts of ministries to create and promote their respective brands. Einstein emphasizes the need of a ministry to create an enduring brand that will distinguish it not only from other ministries, but also from other suppliers of leisure, spiritual, or self-help products.[415]

Singing Out Against Race and Denomination

McClurkin downplayed race and denominationalism, as was commonly done among black neo-Pentecostal televangelists, as well as among crossover P&W artists. Ethicist Jonathan Walton states in the "Benediction" of his book *Watch This!*, that regarding "religious race politics," African American religious leaders were either extremely radical, or compromising for the sake of financial rewards.[416] Although McClurkin had sung at the 1992 Democratic National

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[414] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 138.

[415] Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*, Religion, Media and Culture Series (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 7–9.

[416] Walton, *Watch This!*, 230–31.

Convention and the 2004 Republican National Convention, McClurkin did not evoke a radical call for social justice, nor did he appear to be driven by a political mission.[417]

Yet, McClurkin adamantly denounced racism and denominationalism. In his October 19, 2010 *Perfecting Your Faith* broadcast, he treated both racism and denominationalism as symptoms of a singular problem of pride among Christians. The following quotation is from my transcription of that broadcast, in which McClurkin extemporaneously expounded his doctrine on race and denomination in the church.

> And they took out "Under God [from The Pledge of Allegiance of the United States of American]." "[The Pledge states] One nation, indivisible." Are you kidding? This nation is divisible. It can be divided and it will be divided when you take God out of the equation—every nation that forgets God. And that's where we Christians have become so quiet, and so dormant, and so passive, so docile, and we have lost the zeal of the Gospel. We have developed a pride in ourselves and our religion, and not our relationship [with God]. We boast about Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Church of God, Church of God In Christ, A.O.H. [Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God], P.A.W. [Pentecostal Assemblies of the World], COOLJC [Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith], Anglican, Church of God of Prophecy. We bow, boast about all that stuff; [and, we] don't understand that it's a deterrent. I am *not* Baptist. I am *not* COGIC, I am not P.A.W. I am not A.O.H. I'm not UPC [United Pentecostal Church]. I'm not A-B-C-D-E-F, or G. I am Christian.
>
> I am not a part of a black church, for there is no black church. Al Sharpton, Jesse [Jackson], all them – I don't care 'nothing about what they say. And, there ain't no black church. There's black people that come into a church and make it exclusive. And, that's exactly what God does not want. This is a *kingdom* thing. This is a kingdom thing. [Some people are] talking about, "Because we [are] the *black* church." Well then God's a racist. If there's a black church, then God is a

[417] Richard Leiby, "Donnie McClurkin, Ready to Sing Out Against Gay 'Curse,'" *WashingtonPost.com*, accessed October 23, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A42982-2004Aug28.html. Originally accessed December 10, 2010.

> racist. See, that's why we've got to humble ourselves. Because, we're too proud. Too proud. (emphasis McClurkin's)[418]

It is clear from this statement that McClurkin did not espouse the type of "radical" liberation theology or race rhetoric that Walton brings to mind. One could argue, however, that McClurkin's postulation that "if there's a black church, then God is a racist," *was* a radical statement against racism and denominationalism.

McClurkin's admonition against racism and denominationalism is also evidenced in his recorded music. The title track of *We All Are One*, is about non-denominationalism. McClurkin sings the following lyrics with accompaniment including percussion reminiscent of Irish bodhrán drumming.

> Listen, can I have your ear / Everybody gather near
> Can I ask a question now / Can somebody tell me how
> How we got so separated / How we got so torn apart
> When did we become divided / Tell me now, how did it start
> Some Episcopalian, Church of God, and the Lutheran,
> COGIC, Presbyterian / Gospel, and the CCM
> Baptist and the Methodist / Oneness and the Trinity
> When will we remember we are free?
>
> Chorus:

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[418] *Perfecting Your Faith* (The Word Network, October 19, 2010) Emphasis in this transcription is Pastor McClurkin's. For this and all transcriptions from this telecast, some rhetorical non-words and non-phrases, such as "Y'all don't hear me here," and "Hallelujah," have been removed. He immediately goes on to say:

> We try to break Christianity up in so many different categories and so many different little factions. And each faction boasts that, "We're the right faction." And everyone one of them is on their way to a burning lake if they don't change and bow their knee. For God will never, he will never, he will never validate separation – not from the truth. … The house that's divided against itself can't stand. So if you divide this house …. When you start breaking it up like this, then this foundation and the pillars that hold the structure are weakened, and the building will collapse. That's why people don't want to come to church now - because, the building is collapsing. Because, we've separated it in so many different ways.

And we all are one / One in the Lord

Can we learn to love (Yes) without prejudice? (Yes)
Can we learn to live (Yes) with togetherness? (Yes)
Are we one united? (Yes we are) Are we undivided? (Yes we are)
Are we past the past? (Yes we are) Are we free at last? (Yes)

Tell me can you hear the sound / Dividing walls are falling down
Loving God and loving man / Holding up each other's hands
Differences are tolerated / Starting bonds of unity
Showing all the world that we are free

McClurkin's sung admonitions to get "past the past" and "remember we are free" sound as if he is chastising oppressed groups in general, or African Americans specifically, for not getting over issues of race. That type of stance denies the history of racial injustice that has necessitated the creation of certain racialized denominations in America, such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

Even in the opening sequences of McClurkin's *Perfecting Your Faith* telecast, McClurkin made great efforts to encourage interracial worship gatherings. The television program began with a dynamic opening sequence showing interracial gatherings of people involved in enthusiastic worship, as a globe and letters flew across the screen to display the name of the telecast. The telecast opened with this interracial display despite the fact that the congregation shown listening to McClurkin's sermon in person was obviously predominantly black. McClurkin was performing accessibility to non-black audiences with his interracial opening, even though multiracial gatherings appeared to be a vision not yet fully realized at his church.

Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff suggest that televangelists downplay race and denominationalism in order to present a religious product that is palatable to consumers worldwide. Those who master the current markets, according to the Comaroffs, are those who

can offer products that do not stratify people by generation, gender, or race. Global televangelists easily fit the Comaroffs' description of the "transnational capitalist, or the "international bourgeoisie" who know how to "decontextualize" products to suit anyone in the "planetary market place.[419] Yet, since the multi-racial Azusa Street revivals that marked the inception of Pentecostalism among blacks Americans, black Pentecostals have been known to downplay race in their rhetoric.[420] Consequently, it cannot be assumed that McClurkin or any other black neo-Pentecostal who downplayed race and denominationalism was doing so solely because of capitalist motivations.

Yet, making post-racial pronouncements *was* a way to stay competitive in the consumer-driven religious marketplace. And, McClurkin's "We All Are One" charged the listener to move past denomination (and race) to get to a racially transcendent "kingdom" of God. Again, McClurkin's post-racial lyrics and rhetoric seem to ignore the ugly history of trenchant racism among white American Christians that spurred the creation of many denominations and helped to keep denominations divided by race.[421] In any case, Houghton and McClurkin's crossover success provided a standard of accessible performance to which other black P&W artists were obliged to try or full-out adopt for crossover success.

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[419] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001), 12–13.

[420] For a description of the Azusa Street Revival, which was led by a black man, attended by multiple races, and which marked the start of what Religion scholar Harvaey Cox calls the "pentecostal [*sic*] movement," see Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*, Da Capo Press ed. (Da Capo Press, 2001), 24.

[421] Prime examples include the creation of Assemblies of God, and the denominational split that resulted in Southern Baptist and American Baptist denominations.

Sanctified Secularity

In the first decade of the new millennium, McClurkin masterfully crafted a Christian television persona that was musical, theatrical, cosmopolitan, and worldly-wise, yet simultaneously devoutly Christian. Donnie McClurkin represented a black neo-Pentecostalism that downplayed race and denomination, and exemplified what I call *sanctified secularity*, or a lifestyle that infused religious meaning into involvement in secular activities and ways of being that would have been denounced in more traditional Pentecostal churches.[422]

Sanctified secularity was a hallmark of African American neo-Pentecostalism, and McClurkin upheld this neo-Pentecostal tenet. To live in a manner that was, as ethicist Jonathan Walton describes, "in the world but not of it, unless it is in the name of Jesus," permitted enjoyment of many accoutrements of popular culture while giving spiritual value to the same activities.[423] Sanctified secularity was the spiritual valorization of secular activities; and secular activities included the spiritually innocuous as well as otherwise spiritually harmful activities. Sanctified secularity was not simply changing the designation of an activity from "spiritually harmful" to "spiritually innocuous." Instead, it was saying that to participate in, and especially to organize, the otherwise spiritually harmful activity with an evangelistic or spiritually disciplining intent, made the activity not only unharmful, but also edifying.

[422] See chapter 2 for a discussion of Neo-Pentecostalism.

[423] Walton, *Watch This!*, 79.

The term *sanctified secularity* juxtaposes two words that would be considered ontologically distinct and diametrically contradictory terms among African American Pentecostals. This oxymoronic expression hints at the paradox of Neo-Pentecostal sanctified secularity— that one could fulfill divine purposes by participating in or initiating a secular activity which, by traditional Pentecostal standards, threatens spiritual harm.

During his October 29, 2010 broadcast, McClurkin specified how he himself interpreted the directive to be "in the world but not of it."

> We are in this world, even though we're not of the system. When that scripture says that we are in the world, but not of it, [it] doesn't mean that … we're not attached to the world. It means that we don't function by the system. We're not talking about the political system. We're not talking … about the laws and the rules of the land. We're talking about the system of this world, the way that the world works—the wicked perception of self-preservation. The wicked, mutated view of morals. We don't function by society's rules and regulations, because our society is from another kingdom. We are associated with another kingdom with a king. And although we do obey the rules and regulations down here, whereas we are stationed here, we walk to the beat of a different association. We adhere to another law, another rule. It is the gospel of the Kingdom.[424]

Is this sacred secularity really a sincere Christian religiosity, or is it merely a requisite for viability in the religious consumer market? In her book, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*, Mara Einstein asserts that "branding is about making meaning," as she explains the means by which televangelists brand themselves.[425] Certainly, neo-Pentecostals in general, and televangelists in particular, make spiritual meaning out of the most proletarian activities of popular culture. Attending a play or starring in a movie is not just about

[424] *Perfecting Your Faith* (The Word Network, October 26, 2010).

[425] Einstein, *Brands of Faith*, 70.

entertainment, but the activity is elevated when it is viewed as an aid in Christian discipleship or evangelism.

Many gospel artists and televangelists incorporated the meaning-making of sanctified secularity into their brands. T.D. Jakes' *sanctified secularity*, for example, manifested in his diverse commercial endeavors, such as his novel *Cover Girls*, his romantic *Sacred Love Songs* CD, and his gospel plays and movies.[426]

McClurkin's Sanctified Secularity

Certainly, part of Donnie McClurkin's brand was his sanctified secularity; McClurkin described his secular activities as sanctified or set apart for divine purposes. For Instance, during the October 5, 2010 telecast of his Word Network show "Perfecting Your Faith," McClurkin spent a significant portion of his preachment intimating how he had impressed Disney executives with his expansive knowledge of Disney characters and productions so much, that Disney offered McClurkin a recording contract. In the same telecast, McClurkin detailed some of his interactions with the production company Dreamworks and his evangelistic conversation with Steven Spielberg. After spending at least a third of the broadcast talking about his interactions with movie producer Steven Spielberg, McClurkin then associated his success at Disney and Dreamworks with the actualization of his faith in God. McClurkin concluded by encouraging the congregation to exercise faith. McClurkin was rendering himself accessibility by spending a significant portion of his televised sermon associating himself with the mainstream

[426] Shayne Lee and Phillip Luke Sinitiere, *Holy Mavericks: Evangelical Innovators and the Spiritual Marketplace* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Shayne Lee, *T.D. Jakes: America's New Preacher* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

producer/director Steven Spielberg and production studio Dreamworks, and overtly referencing Disney cartoons and the cinematic blockbuster *ET* (1982).

Without a doubt, watching Disney cartoons and the movie *ET*, as McClurkin must have done, would have been considered "worldly" activities by the standards of traditional Pentecostal doctrine. Furthermore, Disney and Dreamworks would have been considered producers of secular entertainment products. Yet, in his sanctified secularity, McClurkin explained that his collaboration with Disney and Dreamworks were a manifestation of his faith. Furthermore, McClurkin performed accessibility by associating himself with mainstream artists and overtly referencing popular culture.

McClurkin also engaged in sanctified secularity by evoking Pentecostal religiosity in secular spaces, thus superimposing a sacred enclave on the secular public square. McClurkin mastered this type of sanctified secularity with singular prowess and audacity. For example, where other black American televangelists sought to minimize their use of glossolalia in mass-mediated venues, McClurkin seemed to trade in this display of charismata. T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar exercised glossolalia on their respective preaching/teaching broadcasts with noticeable frequency. Yet, McClurkin seemed to thrive on the exercise of glossolalia in liturgical settings as well as evoking Pentecostal liturgy in secular venues.

Week after week, *Perfecting Your Faith* showed McClurkin's ease in employment of traditional black Pentecostal musicality to effect his sermonizing. His sung response to a *Sunday Best* contestant showed McClurkin's currency in this type of Pentecostal music-making in and outside of the pulpit. "Sunday Best |312| Who's Sunday Best? | Videos | BET.com Video," accessed December 12, 2010, http://www.bet.com/video/1169207. In fact, McClurkin had the

ability to turn any platform or location into an instant pulpit or concert stage. This instantaneous concertizing or pulpiteering was further witnessed in his interview of Kirk Franklin and Fred Hammond on a TBN set.[427] Donnie McClurkin sang a few bars of a song that he wanted to introduce, before finally inviting the song's actual composer Fred Hammond to take over the song. McClurkin appeared extremely comfortable with his voice and confident in his ability to both sing and sermonize. Whether at the *Sunday Best* judge's seat, or the TBN interviewer's chair, McClurkin exhibited sanctified secularity through his sacralization of the public square.

Evangelicals have long had a reputation of utilizing the latest technology to propagate their mass-mediated message to as many consumers as possible. Black neo-Pentecostals in particular, however, were not necessarily content with confining their mass-mediated reach to the ghettos of Christian television stations and networks. Black neo-Pentecostals were actively and unashamedly moving into territory that was once considered too unholy for the Pentecostal masses to engage. In this vein, Donnie McClurkin did not want his music to penetrate only Christian radio and television waves, but he wanted the regular stations to feature his music as well. This was evidenced by McClurkin's recorded songs that sound like ballads for animated movies rather than normative gospel songs. In fact, Donnie McClurkin composed and recorded the gospel ballad "I Am," on the "Inspirational" soundtrack for Disney's animated movie *The Prince of Egypt*.[428] Moreover, McClurkin's *Again* (2003) album featured a captivating duet with Yolanda Adams called "The Prayer." The end of the song features a children's choir, and the

[427] "YouTube - Fred Hammond -TBN Interview with Donnie McClurkin - Part 1," accessed October 12, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSez3spTfao.

[428] *The Prince of Egypt: Inspirational*, CD (Dream Works Records, 1998).

stirring lyrics of the song read more like a manifesto for world peace and child safety than a liturgical text. The concluding lyrics include:

> A world where pain and sorrow will be ended
> And every heart that's broken will be mended
> And we'll remember we are all God's children
> Reaching out to touch you
> Reaching to the sky.
>
> …
>
> Let this be our prayer
> Just like every child
> Needs to find a place
> Guide us with your grace
> Give us faith so we'll be safe.[429]

On his CD, *We All Are One (Live in Detroit)* released by Sony Legacy (2009), his duet with Karen Clark Sheard "Wait on the Lord" is another soaring ballad.

With the help of famed gospel crossover sensation Kirk Franklin, McClurkin recorded "O-o-h Child" on his *Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs* CD. "Ooh Child" was a remake of The Five Stairsteps' 1970 hit "O-o-h Child." His accessible performance to audiences beyond black churchgoers was clear, since he recorded the popular song with no change of lyrics. Consequently, McClurkin made no reference to God or any overtly Christian themes in the song, even though the song was placed on an otherwise praise-and-worship album—called *Psalms, Hymns, & Spiritual Songs*. Kirk Franklin made the song's only reference to God when he chanted this call-and-response tag in the middle of the song:

> If you're tired of the crying come on (come on)

[429] "Gospel Lyrics, Black Gospel Lyrics, Christian Lyrics- AllGospelLyrics.com," accessed November 23, 2010, http://allgospellyrics.com/index.php?sec=listing&id=2778; "The Prayer," McClurkin, *Again*.

If you're tired of people dying come on (come on)
If you're tired of the fighting come on (come on)
No more wars, no lying come on (come on)
All the people in the world come on (come on)
Every boy, every girl, come on (come on)
If you know it ain't over, 'til God says that it's over, come on (come on)
Come on (lets go)[430]

McClurkin's accessible performances took him to the big screen, as well. He played the God-fearing yet ministerially frustrated "Minister Hunter" in the 2005 motion picture *The Gospel*, which starred Boris Kodjoe.[431] The story line was a modern twist on the biblical parable of the prodigal son. It was a redemptive tale drenched in secularity. McClurkin lent his talents to this hallmark of sanctified secularity and accessible performance.

McClurkin's October 5, 2010 telecast impressed upon the viewer that it was not only acceptable to watch movies and other secular programming, but it was also acceptable to study and *love* secular entertainment. In this way, McClurkin's neo-Pentecostalism appears to totally abandon the traditional black Pentecostal "Christ-against-culture" lifestyle while fully embracing the musicality and liturgical aesthetics of traditional black Pentecostalism.[432] The danger of sanctified secularity is that it can be taken as a moral free pass. Furthermore, people may be encouraged to participate in activities for which they might be vulnerable to addiction or other personal harm.

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[430] "O-o-h Child," *Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs*.

[431] "The Gospel (2005) - IMDb," accessed November 23, 2010, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0451069/.

[432] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*.

McClurkin balanced his encouragement of sanctified secularity with frequent rhetoric of holy or disciplined living. Surprisingly, McClurkin did not readily relinquish the traditional Pentecostal ways of being in his preaching. For example, he stated the following during his October 26, 2010 telecast:

> Our stance in this gospel cannot be changed, altered, cannot be re-defined, cannot be amended. We can't change with the times because we are not bound by this time. We are children of eternity. Jesus Christ is the same today, and if you walk back a hundred years, yesterday, and if you go ahead a hundred years, for evermore. Jesus Christ is the same.… This gospel will not change, and there will always be a remnant that will stand up and say, "If it costs my life, the Bible is true, Jesus is holy, and there is a way—a highway and a way. And that way shall be called the way of holiness."[433]

Furthermore, McClurkin's entire November 23, 2010 broadcast was dedicated to getting "Back to Holiness." During the broadcast, McClurkin emphasized returning to a sanctified lifestyle in which there were clear delineations between what is right and what is wrong. He made similar statements about living a "disciplined" life in other episodes of his broadcast, as well.

McClurkin did not appear to shy away from talking about spiritual matters, including the workings of charismata in the life of the Christian, during his telecasts. He often included in his teaching lengthy discourses on discerning spirits and speaking in tongues. In the following instance, during his October 26, 2010 broadcast, McClurkin clearly mixed traditional Pentecostalism with neo-Pentecostalism:

> While some of us [are] still acting silly, carrying on in church talking about what I wear and how I look…. I ain't got time for that. And, "Women can't preach," and "Baptize this way," and "The dress got to come down." You got to dress right, but it's not about your dress. You gotta look holy, but it's not about your look. It's about your walk [personal relationship with and devotion to Christ]. 'Cause if you walk holy, you're going to look holy. If you walk holy, the

[433] *October 26, 2010.*

> Holy Ghost will start convicting you [by saying to you], "No, no! All things are lawful but not expedient." Because, the light has a way of shining brightest in the darkness.[434]

Certainly, "dressing right," and "looking holy" were of great importance in traditional Pentecostalism. Yet, walking with "the Holy Ghost," or having a relationship with God, trumped outward appearance in neo-Pentecostalism. It is noteworthy that this preacher encouraged holiness as a lifestyle and downplayed the stereotypical prosperity message, but also spent the majority of his October 5, 2010 broadcast describing his interactions with entertainment moguls and quoting the movie *ET*. At the same time, McClurkin's tone in the November 23, 2010 telecast certainly gave the impression that McClurkin was at very least leaning toward, if not wholly moving toward, a more traditional Pentecostalism. Overall, however, the two months of telecast sermons that I observed coupled with McClurkin's past works in television, radio, and film, proved McClurkin to be an exemplar of neo-Pentecostal sanctified secularity. In all, it was his worldly-wise churchliness, and his melding of traditional and neo-Pentecostalism, that were part and parcel of McClurkin's brand.

Conclusion

At least since the great Bohemian composer Antonin Dvorak stated that "the future of this country [USA] must be founded on what are called negro [sic] melodies," and that those same melodies "are American," African American sacred music has been plagued with questions

[434] Ibid.

about authenticity and originality.[435] Many white scholars took upon themselves the task of proving that African American sacred musics were poor imitations of white musicality. Even George Jackson Pullen, the folklorist largely credited with bringing scholarly attention to the American folk practice of Sacred Harp singing, took great pains to prove that Negro Spirituals were actually poor renditions of European-American songs.[436] Consequently, sacred music has not escaped the scrutiny of African American and white scholars alike, who seek to determine whether the African American artistic genius is a result of either or both African retentions and European adaptations. This was evidenced in the debate between anthropologist Melville Herskovits and sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. Religion scholar Al Raboteau makes clear that African American music, especially African American sacred music, includes both African retentions and European influences.[437]

This consensus among scholars has not quelled the debate about origins of contemporary praise and worship music among practitioners, however. Pollard brings attention to the ongoing debate concerning the origins of contemporary praise and worship music in black churches. As Pollard explains, some believe that praise and worship was adopted by black churches from white evangelical churches. Others argue that praise and worship is merely a revamping of the

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[435] "Real Value of Negro Melodies: Dr. Dvorak Finds In Them the Basis for an American School of Music," *New York Herald*, 1893, 28; Maurice Peress, *Dvořák to Duke Ellington: A Conductor Explores America's Music and Its African American Roots* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25.

[436] George Pullen Jackson, *White and Negro Spirituals, Their Life Span and Kinship, Tracing 200 Years of Untrammeled Song Making and Singing among Our Country Folk, with 116 Songs as Sung by Both Races* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1943), 256–57.

[437] Melville J. Herskovits, "The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method," *American Sociological Review* 8 (1943): 394–404; Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*.

traditional “devotional” liturgical practice and music that have been part of African American Protestant worship for generations. Consequently, it is necessary to enumerate the history of praise and worship among white evangelical denominations, even as this chapter focuses on praise and worship in the African American tradition. I have argued that the practice of praise and worship is in fact not a new phenomenon among black Pentecostal churches; instead, it is simply a new name for the very old practice of *devotion* or *devotional*.

In my own experience visiting black churches in Boston and the surrounding areas, I have witnessed the adoption of praise and worship music from the CCM tradition, and to the abandonment of praise and worship music from the black sacred music tradition. In most cases, the adoption and employment of more CCM-infused music appeared to have been part of efforts to attract multi-ethnic/multi-racial audiences. A congregant and soloist at one of the churches I visited suggested that because black musicians and choir members at that particular church had not grown up in black American churches, they were not familiar enough to teach or sing praise and worship music from the black American tradition.

Likewise, in Accra Ghana, I found that while the musicians were thoroughly versed in African American gospel musicality, the P&W singers based their vocal stylings and repertoires largely on the Maranatha! And Integrity catalogs of praise and worship music, rather than on African American gospel. A scholar-preacher suggested to me that this was because white praise and worship artists actually visited the country in the 1980s, bringing their music with them; whereas, black American gospel artists did not come. So generations of Ghanaians have come to know and love the music of Maranatha!, Hosanna! And Hillsong catalogs.

Today, many black American musicians and scholars also lament the abandonment of spirituals and anthems in lieu of praise and worship, in black American churches. African American sacred music has long been considered a product of hybridization, or a mixing of sounds and styles from various cultures.[438] Yet, abandonment of traditional black gospel aesthetics based upon the premise that people of other races or ethnicities are more amenable to CCM praise and worship may just be a tragic manifestation of dysconscious racism.

Israel Houghton's message of knowing one's relationship with God as life-giving, gracious, loving, and defined by friendship, is a necessary message. In fact, relationship with God and chosenness by God were tenets of enslaved Christians.[439] Yet, the discourse of post-racial friendship with God cannot be the only discourse of African American churches. Indeed, Israel Houghton's own turn toward social justice and his assertion that worship ought to lead to the work of justice signify that he understands that holistic ministry requires more than just feel-good praise and worship discourses.[440]

The introduction and widespread circulation of texts and music from white American and Australian praise and worship music catalogs, such as Hillsong (Australian), Maranatha!, and Hosanna!/Integrity, pushed post-racial discourses in, and racialized discourses out of black gospel and black liturgy. Houghton's discourse of relationship with God, communicated without

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[438] Portia K. Maultsby, Mellonee V. Burnim, and Susan Oehler, "Intellectual History," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13.

[439] Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr, "Introduction: Towards New Visions and New Approaches in African American Religious Studies," in *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), xx.

[440] Houghton, *A Deeper Level*, 127.

the urgency of African American suffering that had characterized gospel of generations past, makes this clear. Liberation theologian James Cone admonishes, however, that "Religion is wrought out of the experience of the people who encounter the divine in the midst of historical realities."[441]

Therefore, I conclude with the reflection that the current historical realities of oppression and racial discrimination still warrant employment of sorrow songs, or songs of lament, that speak of black American anguish. Furthermore, there is still a need for the voice of hope in the midst of the persistent and particular struggle of African Americans. This is the hope that allows one to sing the words of the old spiritual "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen," and conclude it with the words "Glory, hallelujah."[442]

[441] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 28.

[442] Ibid., 57.

Conclusion

While evangelical traditions across the United States of America have subscribed to a revisionist theology that interprets consumption as an act of piety, my dissertation research suggests that Black neo-Pentecostals have only recently succumbed to this consumption-driven revisionism, and this theological shift has enabled the rise of platinum-age gospel music. As gospel artists have focused intently on accessing mainstream markets, they have moved away from the traditional lyrical emphases on overcoming racialized struggle and persecution that have historically defined much of black gospel music. In this way, the racial motifs that distinguished black gospel music from other types of Christian music have given way, for better *and* worse, to discourses of post-racialism, prosperity, and global and heavenly citizenship.

During the platinum age of gospel, crossover gospel artists did the good work of evangelizing to the masses beyond the church walls. In the process, however many abandoned the liturgical needs of the local church. Then, the corporate resources that fueled the platinum age began to dry up in the early 2000s, and were gone by the 2010s. But gospel artists have continued to operate with the value system established in the crossover-gospel boom of the early 1990s. Artists still want mainstream success. Who can blame anyone for that? Yet, few have the resources to actualize that aspiration. And, the industry's focus on crossover markets—white Christian and black popular—ultimately causes local churches to suffer from a dearth of new, innovative liturgical music.

Some artists are returning to church-centered ministry. Tina Campbell, half of the crossover gospel duo Mary Mary, has returned to her church roots with "Destiny," her first single as a solo artist. "Destiny" features a melody reminiscent of the old Pentecostal refrains "I Need Thee" and "Yes, Lord." Dallas musician-arranger Roy Cotton II has also found acclaim with his *Bring Back the Hymns* CD and campaign. As a church musician, I welcome the return of "church music."

Over the years that I have been conducting dissertation research, I would of course tell people that I was studying contemporary gospel music. Usually, gospel enthusiasts would then respond with woeful statements about how terrible the music is today. Yet, my goal has not been to write a "narrative of decline."[443] Instead, I hope that this work will encourage gospel music-makers to remember their position in the historical trajectory of this music, understand their relationship to the church, and reclaim their place as musical innovators. Finally, may this work encourage people to listen to gospel music with an ear to hear the sacred resound amidst quotidian words and common chords.

[443] Thanks to Dr. Jonathan Walton for introducing me to this expression.

Appendices

Appendix A: Gospel Music History

Table 0.1 Gospel Music Milestones

Dates	Milestones
1920s	Early Race Records
1930-1944	Later Race Records
1945-1965	Golden Age of Gospel Choirs gain prominence, as quartet groups continue to flourish
1965-1969	Choir music begin to include sophisticated polyphony across voice parts. Mattie Moss Clark revolutionizes choir sound James Cleveland rises to prominence and founds GMWA in 1967
1969-1975	Emergence of Contemporary Gospel Andraé Crouch and the Disciples incorporate disco in their sound. Finding great crossover success "Oh Happy Day" gains nationwide attention, marking the birth of contemporary gospel. It was a choir sound that introduces contemporary gospel
1975-1985	Small groups begin to dominate, such as • Andraé Crouch and the Disciples • The Hawkins • The Winans • The Clark Sisters -- 1973 • Commissioned 1982
1980-1990	Traditional Choir Sound Incorporates Jazz-inflected harmonies by artists such as o Keith Pringle o Thomas Whitfield o Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Singers
1985-1995	Rise of Praise and Worship Praise and Worship artists begin to dominate, such as

Table 0.1 (Continued)

	• Judy McCallister & West Angeles COGIC • Keith Staten • Motor City Mass • Fred Hammond & RFC Emergence of the chorale, or choral ensemble • John P. Kee and New Life Community Choir • Donald Lawrence • Radical for Christ Emergence of Urban Contemporary Gospel Choir • Hezekiah Walker, LFC • God's Property • John P. Kee and New Life Community Choir • John P. Kee and Victory in Praise Music and Arts Seminar Mass Choir (VIP Mass Choir)

1993-2013	Platinum Age of Gospel
	• The Small Group/Urban Choirs and Soloists dominate with R&B/Funk/Hip Hop inflections
	  ○ Kirk Franklin & the Family
	  ○ BeBe & CeCE
	  ○ Mary Mary
	  ○ Deitrick Haddon
	  ○ Tye Tribbett
	• Praise and Worship covers
	  ○ Donnie McClurkin
	  ○ Micah Stampley
	  ○ Jonathan Nelson
	• Churches and/or Pastors Release Albums
	  ○ Carlton Pierson
	  ○ Eddie Long
	  ○ T.D. Jakes
	  ○ Noel Jones
	• Praise & Worship influences Traditional Choir
	  ○ Ricky Dillard
	  ○ J.J. Hairston & Youthful Praise
	  ○ Donald Lawrence
	• Holy Hip Develops largely apart from mainstream gospel industry
	  ○ Canton Jones
	  ○ BB Jay
	  ○ Lecrae

Table 0.1 (Continued)

	○ 116 Clique Label • A number of secular hip hop artists go gospel ○ Bushwick Bill ○ KRS-1 ○ Rev. Run (Christian reality TV show star on television)
2010-present	Entertainment Portfolio Diversification is more important than the music. Most national artists are working to get into theater/movies/TV. ○ Mary Mary ○ Tyler Perry ○ David and Tamela Mann ○ Kirk Franklin ○ Sunday Best ○ Gospel According to Dorinda ○ CeCe Winans show back in the 1990s on cable?, although she was no stranger to TV, having been on *PTL* with her brother BeBe ○ Fred Hammond Traditional Choir Sound ○ Ricky Dillard ○ Donald Lawrence ○ J.J. Hairston & Youthful Praise Urban Choir ○ Deitrick Haddon ○ Tye Tribbett

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