

SOCIAL, EVANGELICAL, AND CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACHES  
TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THE BAPTIST TRADITION

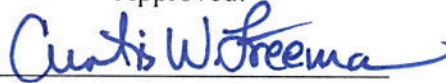
by

Michael Anthony Long

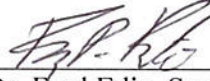
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Ministry in the Divinity School  
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2018

ABSTRACT

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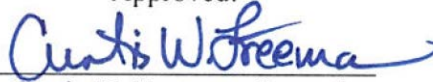
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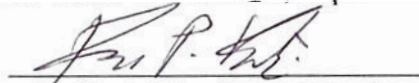
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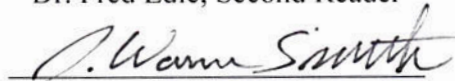
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## **Abstract**

A precise definition for Christian spiritual formation is elusive and how it is described varies from one faith tradition to another. It also varies over periods of time, as a faith community meets the challenges which they encounter. One of the primary roles of pastoral leaders is to “make disciples” of Jesus Christ by communicating and embedding the essentials of the Christian faith into the lives of congregants and to evaluate the spiritual formation process, which guides them into spiritual maturity. Historically, methodologies concerning Christian spiritual formation have approached spiritual development in one of three ways: through ideas, through embodied habits and practices, or a combination of both.

This thesis traces spiritual formation in the African American Baptist tradition from the early twentieth century to modern time by using a typology which describes the combination of African American Baptist religious thoughts and ideas as well as the spiritual habits and practices they embodied. The spiritual formation types discussed are social, evangelical, and contemplative. Each spiritual formation type offers its own fundamental precepts from Christian Scripture, tradition, and doctrine and guides spiritual development towards a specific destination or purpose. The primary context for this research is African American Baptist churches; however, it will be drawing upon resources from the wider scope of Baptists in America and American Christianity. The questions raised in this thesis are whether there is a typology for spiritual formation that describes African American Baptist spirituality and is there a way to discern the spiritual formation types as useful indicators for guiding pastoral leadership, administration, and management. This thesis makes connections between the spiritual formation types and biblical leadership motifs in order to place spiritual formation into conversation with

pastoral leadership, in hopes of discovering new ways to understand and serve the spiritual need of the congregation and community.

The methodology of this thesis employs qualitative research which includes church historical records, literary and scholarly journals, autobiographical resources, and contemporary internet source material. The theological approach taken in the thesis is to consider the hermeneutical lens that is being used by the pastoral leader, church, or Baptist organization and view the *telos* from their point of view. This thesis does not argue for one spiritual formation type over another but rather argues that African American Baptist spirituality utilizes all three types, most times simultaneously, but one is usually predominate with respect to the others. The claim that is made is that by discerning the spiritual formation type, pastoral leadership is empowered with insight on how to best guide and nurture spiritual formation in African American Baptist churches.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to some spiritual giants in my life and family who nurtured me with their wisdom and care. To my father, Lemon Thomas Long (1945-2007) and my grandfather, Luther Burrell Jr., I owe more than words can express for you have caused my spirit to run deep in the Christian faith. You have raised a Christian standard that I hope to pass along to the generations that will follow me. To my father and mother-in-law, Richard and Dorothy DeShazo, thank you for the prayers you prayed for the future of our family. I still hear your reassuring words, telling us that everything will be alright. We are still receiving the benefits of your prayers and words.

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I acknowledge my mother, Patricia B. Long and praise God for the spiritual nurture you gave and continue to provide for my brother, Steve, and I. To my uncle, Roger E. Burrell, thank you for continuing to provide the spiritual strength and support that our extended families need. To my sister (in-law), Wendy DeShazo, thank you for your encouragement and prayerful spirit.

I am grateful for the privilege to serve as Pastor of the Zion Baptist Church of Reidsville, NC. I appreciate the support I received from the officers and members while I was working on this project. It is my joy to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your midst and to participate with Christ in your spiritual nurture and care.

I give special recognition to Dr. Curtis Freeman for his mentorship and true friendship during my studies at Duke. You have cultivated my spirit in so many life-changing ways. And to Dr. Fred Edie, thanks for inspiring me to be a dedicated Christian educator, intent on nurturing Christian spiritual formation in the lives of others.

# 1. Introduction, Thesis Context, and Goal

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? (1 Cor. 3:1-3 NIV)

There is something very disturbing about the Apostle Paul's critique of the spiritual maturity of the Christians at Corinth. His words are troubling on many levels for the laity, but especially for pastoral leaders. The lay members may not have been able to discern the progress of their own spiritual development and therefore, may have assumed that they were demonstrating the characteristics of the spiritually mature. But their spiritual condition was troubling from the vantage point of a spiritual leader. Paul expressed dissatisfaction with the spiritual growth of the Corinthian Christians because they were demonstrating all of the characteristics of spiritual babies, i.e. jealousy and quarreling. Outwardly, the Corinthian believers were not displaying virtues that reflected inner spiritual maturity that Paul both desired and expected. Something major has gone wrong in their process of growing from spiritual infancy to maturity. There is no immediate explanation as to why are they not farther along in their spiritual growth. We can sense the despair being raised in Paul's words. Paul was frustrated that their spiritual development had stalled. They should be stronger in the spirit but they were showing signs of carnality, which were overruling the signs and evidence of spiritual maturity. It is the same despair raised by pastoral and lay leaders today. There are questions concerning how much of the responsibility for spiritual formation lie with the laity and with pastoral leadership.

What is Christian spiritual formation and how should it take form in African American Baptist Churches?<sup>1</sup>

Clergy/pastoral leaders have received the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) to go throughout the world and make disciples. They are called to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to “sow the seeds” of His Word, and nurture spiritual fruit or tangible results in the lives of Christian believers. But our challenge is to discern whether spiritual renewal and development is taking place. Christian leaders are required to strategically plan for and evaluate spiritual growth among the various and diverse groups in the Church.

Cultivating spiritual development in others is no easy task for several reasons. First, it is difficult to define what we mean when we discuss the term “spiritual formation” or “spiritual development.” The definition varies in religious and secular context, within different religious traditions, and over different eras in history. Second, it is difficult to measure or evaluate the experiences of the soul and spirit. Every attempt to measure the experiences of the soul by using non-spiritual tools and metrics, such as congregation size, annual budget, number of programs, number of baptisms, etc., ultimately fails to produce accurate insight on what the Spirit is doing in the life of the individual or in the church. And third, the spirit is a living component of human existence which has a distinct set of needs for its well-being, some needs we know and others that are mysterious to us.

Apostle Paul not only struggled with the state of spiritual formation in the Corinthian church, but he also wrestled with his own level of spiritual development:

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing (Romans 7:18-19).

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “Black” and “Black or African American” are used interchangeably in this thesis.

Within Paul's words, we get a sense of disappointment and dismay. It appears as if he is not satisfied with his own spiritual shortcomings in the war between the flesh and the spirit and yearns for more spiritual power to overcome all of his spiritual issues. In his despair, he appeals to the Holy Spirit for relief and release from the un-winnable battle he faces. In the African American Baptist tradition, we strive for the same solutions, as did Paul, for better discernment of spiritual formation in the congregation and within ourselves as spiritual leaders. To better understand Christian spiritual formation, we must look at how spiritual formation has been historically defined in the Baptist tradition and how the definition of spiritual formation and development specifically applies in the African American Baptist context.

This study will investigate the definitions of Christian spiritual formation and the role of pastoral leadership in identifying, nurturing, and assessing spiritual development within the congregation. One of the primary roles of pastoral leaders is to "make disciples" of Jesus Christ by communicating and embedding the essentials of the Christian faith into the lives of congregants. Pastoral leaders are tasked with integrating the doctrinal and experiential aspects of Christianity with balance and precision to cultivate spiritual growth in the congregation from infancy to spiritual maturity. The Baptist manuals,<sup>2</sup> which guide and inform polity, church organization, and practices, assigns the "spiritual wellbeing of the church" into the charge and care of the pastor and deacon officers.<sup>3</sup> In the early Baptist church, responsibility for the primary spiritual care of the church was placed upon the pastor:

The chief office-bearer in the Baptist churches of an earlier day was the pastor (also called elder or bishop), who was to preach, teach, counsel, admonish, and administer. Deacons were to assist

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<sup>2</sup> African American Baptists most commonly use the Standard Manual for Baptist Church by Edward T. Hiscox and The Church Covenant from Newton Brown. Some Baptist source material commonly used in African American Baptist Churches, i.e. the Articles of Faith comes from the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1991), 97.

the pastor by looking after temporal affairs of the church, so that the pastor's attention need not be diverted from the main responsibilities.<sup>4</sup>

The definition of the term "Christian spiritual formation" continues to evolve with time.

Philosopher and Baptist Christian thinker Dallas Willard (1935-2013) has defined spiritual formation as the "Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself. The *telos* of spiritual formation is not to become a person who does the right things, but rather to become the type of person who is capable of doing the right things in the power of the Spirit."<sup>5</sup> Willard sees transformation beginning with the transformation of the mind and thoughts. The mind is comprised of ideas, images, information, and the ability to think, with ideas and images being the most important aspects. Spiritual formation comes to fruition "as ideas related to identity, wisdom, and discipleship are refined and more accurately understood, then they will form the life according to the truths of God."<sup>6</sup> When the mind is transformed, the whole of the person, feelings, the will, the body, social contact, and the soul is transformed as well. The relationship of mind, body, and spirit is among many complex relationships that touch and impact spiritual formation. At the core of engaging any approach or methodology concerning Christian spiritual formation is the consideration of whether people are spiritually formed through ideas, through embodied habits and practices or a combination of both. Sara Goff reflects on the relationship between spirituality and practice highlighted in a book by Renee Miller, entitled "Strength for the Journey: A Guide to Spiritual Practice" which notes "one of the reasons for doing spiritual practice at all is to help us connect what occurs in our lives with the reality of God's love in all the activities of our life.

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<sup>4</sup> Maring, *A Baptist Manual*, 98.

<sup>5</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Rob Rhea, "Spiritual Formation in the Christian Academy: The Dialects of Church, Culture, and the Larger Integrative Task," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, vol. 39 (2011): 7.

The dualism that is so prevalent in our culture and in our own lives all too often keeps activity separate from God.”<sup>7</sup> Christian spiritual formation in the African American Baptist tradition presents the reality of God at work in the Black community, working through pastoral and lay leadership to nourish the spirit of the church in all of the activities and events of life.

M. Robert Mulholland Jr. (1936-2015), professor emeritus of New Testament at Asbury Seminary, said that “spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”<sup>8</sup> Mulholland connects the process of spiritual formation in one person with the spiritual needs of others. As we are being conformed to the image of Christ, others are able to see Christ through us and they are made stronger spiritually. Christian spiritual formation is a process that is accomplished within the context of a community of people with the objective of mutual spiritual growth and wellbeing of the entire group.

There is a strong connection between spiritual formation and Christian education. A true understanding of education and spiritual formation involves emphasis on making the implicit explicit.<sup>9</sup> In other words, there are obvious and explicit elements of Christian Education that involve curriculum selection and course of study planning but the underlying implicit aspects of spiritual formation are often overlooked. For example, implicit aspects of spiritual formation take into account how the worship environment also teaches about God and our relationship with God through pulpit/seating arrangements, symbols, colors, banners, and stories depicted in stain glass windows.<sup>10</sup> Spiritual formation is also influenced by gestures and movements throughout our worship or gathering spaces. It is noteworthy that “over 80 percent of what we communicate is

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<sup>7</sup> Sara Shisler Goff, “Developing Affective Competence Through Spiritual Practice,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2014): 40.

<sup>8</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr. authored several books including the landmark spiritual formation book, *Invitation to a Journey* (1993). In this book, he reviews the classical spiritual disciplines and demonstrates the importance of undertaking our spiritual journey with (and for the sake of) others. Rhea, *Spiritual Formation*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Anne Keely, “Spiritual Formation: Making the Implicit More Explicit,” *The Clergy Journal*, vol. 79, no. 2 (2002): 34.

<sup>10</sup> Keely, *Spiritual Formation*, 34.

non-verbal and this non-verbal communication is a major component of spiritual formation.”<sup>11</sup>

Elements within the worship space invoke questions that connect rituals with symbols which create spiritual meaning and memory.

Nicholas Austin’s definition of Christian formation “refers, not to being forced to fit a predetermined mould but to the growth of the disciple into a unique image of Christ.” Christian formation involves the task of becoming the kind of person who can live out their calling to the fullest, after the call has been discerned and a life commitment has been made.<sup>12</sup> By using the *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius of Loyola and the *Summa Theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas, Austin asks the question concerning the relationship of spiritual experience and action. In other words, the *telos* of spiritual formation should be to obtain a spirituality of life, “a path of life to be walked”, and not just a spirituality of experience, which involves simply a process of spiritual tasks.<sup>13</sup> Christian formation includes incarnation of the *Spiritual Exercises* into the details of a person’s life. Austin presents a definition of Christian formation by engaging conversation between Thomistic ethics and Ignatian spirituality. In his definition, Austin takes Thomas’s “overarching vision of the growth in virtue through the Spirit” and Ignatius’s “experiential spirituality of discernment” to formulate a description that overcomes Thomas’s lack of “narrative detail of how virtue is displayed in the experience of Christian life” and Ignatius’s lack of how “spirituality is to be lived out in the rest of life.”<sup>14</sup>

For Thomas, human beings are not only said to be *in* the image of God, but also moving *towards* the image of God.<sup>15</sup> With Jesus Christ as our exemplar, human beings are moving

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas Austin, “Spirituality and Virtue in Christian Formation: A Conversation Between Thomistic and Ignatian Traditions,” *New Blackfriars*, vol. 97, no. 1068 (2016): 202.

<sup>13</sup> Austin, *Spirituality and Virtue*, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Austin, *Spirituality and Virtue*, 206.

towards the perfect image of God through imitating the likeness of Christ. According to Thomas, the definition of spiritual formation “conveys a process in which the created image moves towards becoming the perfected image in glory through grace, virtue, and its acts.”<sup>16</sup> The process of spiritual formation is a process of “becoming, through virtue, more like God humanized, *Deus humanatus*.”<sup>17</sup> Some of the primary questions concerning Thomas’ view of Christian formation include his view of “infused” and “acquired” virtue in the role of growth of virtue in the Christian. Infused virtue is generated and increased in the soul by God alone and acquired virtue is developed gradually by human efforts.<sup>18</sup> Thomas and Ignatius would agree that Christian spiritual formation is the process involved with intentional habits for spiritual growth and development where the virtues and grace play major roles.

A way of viewing Christian spiritual formation is as a process by which a person is acquainted with the basic tenets of the Christian faith and is guided through a series of communal experiences in which Christian faith can be modeled, demonstrated, and communicated to others by their way of living. Different faith traditions approach the task of translating biblical text into creeds and affirmations in order to formulate a fundamental core of tenets of faith. Spiritual formation can also be defined as “a shaping process with reference to the spiritual dimension of a person's life. Christian spiritual formation thus refers to the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to Christ.”<sup>19</sup> Spiritual formation is shaped by two forces: what it is and what it is not. A way of expressing this notion is “Christian spiritual formation is not simply improving the regularity of prayer or Bible study. It is not merely becoming personally

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Evan Howard, “Three temptations of spiritual formation: when seeking to be shaped by Christ, it is all too easy to veer from a fully Christian approach,” *Christianity Today*, (2002), 46. Academic OneFile, [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=duke\\_perkins&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA94932626&it=r&asid=7926f8b6f579870166e6c9d931256504](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=duke_perkins&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA94932626&it=r&asid=7926f8b6f579870166e6c9d931256504). (accessed November 28, 2016).



accountable for our sins. Christian spiritual formation is the transformation of our spirit through the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>20</sup> African American Baptists, like others in different faith traditions, bring their own uniqueness to understanding and defining spiritual formation.

In Baptist theology, a distinction is made between creeds (literally from the Latin *credo* = “I believe”) and confessional statements. William H. Brackney is a Baptist and historical theologian who specializes in post-Reformation Christianity. He traces the significant theological themes held by Baptists over that past four centuries. The creeds evolved from “first century kerygmatic statements to become standards of orthodoxy for the Christian community. These statements brought about a collective consciousness of Christian beliefs that had been largely understood in individual terms. Creeds are still used in many contemporary churches as binding acts of allegiance to God.”<sup>21</sup> Confessions are summations of religious belief in succinct form and are contrasted with creeds in two significant ways. First, creeds functioned to unify a fractured church with declarations of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Confessions on the other hand were statements which implicitly recognized the divisions among churches. Second, confessions differed from creeds by their individualistic nature, close association with Christian experience and desire to articulate a unique theological identity, often connected to experience of suffering persecution.<sup>22</sup>

The African American Baptist experience is a category all to itself and yet displays the genetic traits which relate it to the entirety of the Baptist tradition.<sup>23</sup> Black Baptist theology is comprised of several themes which include a “compensatory pattern” that assured Black Baptists that God knows their struggles and is on their side. The other major theme included powerful

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Brackney, *A Genetic History*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Brackney, *A Genetic History*, 430.

metaphors concerning God's justice and that "the Negro is not an inferior person" in the sight of God.<sup>24</sup> The uniqueness of Black Baptist theology is by highlighting the influence of African American pastors and theologians like John Jasper (1812-1901), William James Simmons (1849-1890), Miles Mark Fisher (1899-1970), and Howard Thurman (1899-1981). Black Baptist theology was not just a copy of theological ideas borrowed from white churches but was a new creation of theological tools designed to bring the hope of the gospel into the lives of those who history attempted to rob of hope.<sup>25</sup> Black Baptists were drawn to a form of Christianity that was experiential, revivalistic, and biblically oriented, which placed emphasis on the "necessity of an inward conversion experience for Christian salvation."<sup>26</sup>

Baptist confessions of faith cover a wide variety of documents. The period of confessions of faith "stretches from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, with an observable resurgence in the twentieth century as new Baptist groups formed."<sup>27</sup> Baptist history reveals that "what is obvious from the documentary evidence is that there is no one confessional tradition that reflects anything close to a comprehensive 'Baptist' perspective across time."<sup>28</sup> Some confessions of faith originated from individuals who placed their ideas concerning baptism, church membership, church governance, and the relation of Church and State on the table for group discussion and negotiation and some originated from groups of churches who formed associations. For Baptists, early confessional statements provided the foundation for spiritual formation and group cohesion during periods of persecution and exclusion from the larger society and established religious institutions.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 465.

<sup>26</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism: The Meaning of Slavery." chap. 5 in *African-American Religion: Interpretative Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 91.

<sup>27</sup> Brackney, *A Genetic History*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

It must be notated that “Baptist spiritual tradition has its roots in Puritanism birthed in England and the American colonies during the seventeenth century – but it diverges from the Puritan mainstream in its radical concern for the voluntary principle in religion.”<sup>29</sup> Baptists are connected with the Reformation however, “Baptist represent a wing of the Reformation that had little regard for creeds, dogmatic treatises, and systematic theology. This is understandable due in large measure to the persecution suffered under the auspices of established religion.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the Baptist faith is well grounded in Reformation faith, even if Baptist roots are often obscured and not seen as connected with the larger history of interpretation within the church.<sup>31</sup> The dislocation of Baptist faith from Reformed faith creates a theological disorientation for Baptists when they construct a theology of spiritual formation that gleans from the spiritual reflection and practices from the Reformed tradition.

Spiritual formation cannot be fully understood independent of culture and the ways in which culture itself is formative. The term “culture” has many definitions. Rhea’s definition of culture as “the sum total of the people’s voluntary works, expressing in objective form their highest beliefs, values, and hopes – in short, their vision of freedom and being fully human” provides a framework that situates spiritual formation within the influence of beliefs, values, and hopes that people aspire to fulfill.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, culture “is a system of beliefs that embody what is valued most highly and prized most dearly within a group. These beliefs and values together form a worldview, which acts as a lens through which life is experienced.”<sup>33</sup> Rhea refers to James K. A. Smith’s understanding of worldview as being “more than a set of cognitive

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<sup>29</sup> Glenn E Hinson, “Baptist Approach to Spirituality,” *Baptist History and Heritage* (2002): 6.

<sup>30</sup> William C. Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians: A Journey through the Church Covenant*. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002). Kindle ebook file. Location 76.

<sup>31</sup> Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians*, Kindle Location 81.

<sup>32</sup> Rhea, *Spiritual Formation*, 8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

assents or an intellectual endeavor;” it should be conceived of as formation not just information.”<sup>34</sup>

Culture also has formative practices that are both explicit and implicit. Culture is not static, but dynamic and is always exerting influence. One can understand culture as exerting influence in four movements: culture communicates, orients, reproduces, and cultivates.<sup>35</sup> Culture has many layers of communication. The Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede proposes that culture can be seen as an onion. At the center of the onion are the core values of the respective culture. Rituals, social, and ceremonial conventions make up the second layer and are developed out of these values. The third layer consists of heroes, real or imagined, which are elevated to reflect and promote the values of society. The fourth and final layer of the onion are artifacts, or the tangible expressions seen throughout the culture in question. This rubric of understanding is helpful in terms of language for the church and for culture.<sup>36</sup> Culture “orients” by its ability “to create and maintain a whole meaning making system for people through which they get identity and an understanding of the world.” Through images, symbols, and experiences, culture creates structures of meaning about what constitutes “the good life.”<sup>37</sup> Orientation is done by creating frameworks and modalities where we find our place in society and within a particular worldview.

Cultural reproduction is compared to the function of a virus. A virus has no cellular substance of its own but invades an existing cell and changes the structure of the cell towards its own ends. Culture is a system of inheritance.<sup>38</sup> The explosion of personal media delivering

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer (b. 1957) is an American Reformed Evangelical and Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Rhea, *Spiritual Formation*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Rhea, *Spiritual Formation*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>38</sup> Rhea, *Spiritual Formation*, 9.

technology has given everyone the capability of sending anything “viral”, which means “every member of the larger culture has the exponential ability to spread and reproduce their expressions and understandings of the world around them.”<sup>39</sup>

Our study raises the question about what does culture cultivate? Drawing from Vanhoozer and his reflection on Willard’s definition of formation, it is noted that culture “without any regard for a religious tradition,” is engaged in “the process by which the human spirit is given a definite form or character.” In other words, “culture cultivates a character and heart-habits, which are expressed in attitudes and actions.”<sup>40</sup> The process of cultivation readily occurs through what Leonard Sweet called cultures’ EPIC influence. North American culture is Experiential, Participatory, Image driven, and Connected.<sup>41</sup> Authentic personal experience is paramount in today’s culture and without question, we live in an image driven and highly connected environment.

One of the greatest benefits of being connected to a religious group is the opportunity for spiritual formation to take place in an environment of participation. Rodney Kennedy observes “to be formative requires participation in the rhythm of Christian liturgy. Thus, within the parameters of the practice of worship, there are multiple activities that develop, energize, and shape the Christian believer, not only as an individual, but as a participant within the gathered community, the *ekklesia*.”<sup>42</sup> The role liturgical pedagogy plays in spiritual development could be directly related to interpreting and applying Sweet’s EPIC influence definition of culture into “spiritual” or rather Christian spiritual formation terms. In other words, beyond the traditional use of the Baptist Church Covenant in corporate worship and teaching activities, a new litany of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Rodney Wallace Kennedy and Derek C. Hatch, *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), ix.

involvement, instruction, creative visual design, or community-building study series should be developed to engage a generation of people seeking spiritual wholeness and growth. In Romano Guardini's essay, "An Open Letter," emphasis is placed on the liturgical act and the relationship it creates and maintains between the Church as a whole and its individual members.<sup>43</sup> The liturgical act includes, what Guardini calls "participation through looking." With respect to spiritual development, group liturgical actions invite members to experience core beliefs by direct participation or by observation in order to create well connected social bonds with each other.

There are some aspects of spiritual formation that must consider periods of non-verbal communication. This is a time of teaching that communicates meaning without overemphasis on words. Guardini would consider this an important part of the pedagogical process for he states, "there is no need for words to give the 'meaning', for it is realized in the act itself. The same is true of localities and special places, times, days, and hours."<sup>44</sup> Historically, every time the first century Church gathered in the homes of its members to pray, hear the Scriptures read, or share in the Lord's Supper, they were signifying the importance of these acts in the life of the Church. Guardini believed that the members of a religious community interact and participate in ritual worship together by observing and responding to liturgical gestures that are "co-performed through the act of looking."<sup>45</sup>

What is at stake or risk if spiritual formation is not given deliberate and strategic focus in the African American Baptist tradition? African American Baptist Churches risk losing their

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<sup>43</sup> Guardini's primary concern is whether the impact of twentieth-century individualism has made it impossible for Christians to "really engage in worship." He fears that the Christian has forgotten the "way of doing things" in worship which provides for a meaningful liturgical experience. Romano Guardini, "An Open Letter," chap. 1 in *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 3-8.

<sup>44</sup> Guardini suggested that the liturgical action is not to be viewed as lifeless events "to get through" but rather as events that possess religious significance and become "religious actions." Guardini, *An Open Letter*, 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Guardini, *An Open Letter*, 6.

ability to provide community cohesiveness and evidence of social and religious relevance.

According to data from the Pew Research Center (2017):

Most U.S. adults now say it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values (56%), up from about half (49%) who expressed this view in 2011. This increase reflects the continued growth in the share of the population that has no religious affiliation, but it also is the result of changing attitudes among those who do identify with a religion, including white evangelical Protestants. Among African Americans, 26% of those with a religious affiliation expressed that you didn't need God to be moral.<sup>46</sup>

Pew research data also show that religious institutions are losing their ability to define “spirituality” for society. The Pew Reports confirm that the trend of people who identify themselves as “Spiritual but not religious” (SBNR) is growing. From 2012 to September 2017, this number has increased from 19 to 27%. Within this group, among African Americans it has risen from 19 to 26%. The data reflect:

Many in the “spiritual but not religious” category have low levels of religious observance, saying they seldom or never attend religious services (49%, compared with 33% of the general public) and that religion is “not too” or “not at all” important in their lives (44% vs. 25% of all U.S. adults).<sup>47</sup>

According to the data, a large and growing percentage of African Americans do not see the need of the church in guiding their spiritual formation and development. The trend among this group is to experience less participation in religious observations and services and to engage in more exploration of spiritualities through social media channels. Research suggest that people are more willing to identify themselves as “spiritual” but without a church, denomination, or religious affiliation. More people are identifying themselves as not religious:

Only 54% of U.S. adults think of themselves as religious – down 11 points since 2012 – while far more (75%) say they are spiritual, a figure that has remained relatively steady in recent years.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gregory A. Smith, “A growing share of Americans say it’s not necessary to believe in God to be moral.” Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/16/a-growing-share-of-americans-say-its-not-necessary-to-believe-in-god-to-be-moral/> (accessed October 20, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Lipka and Claire Gecemicz, “More Americans now say they’re spiritual but not religious.” Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/> (accessed October 20, 2017).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, African American Baptist churches and its leaders were viewed as very necessary for the racial uplift of their community. Adam Bond notes that “black Baptists were fighting on several fronts to change the dynamics of their citizenship status. They wanted to improve the United States. Yet, they did not always agree on how to do it.”<sup>49</sup> Spiritual formation and development was closely linked with strategies designed to address the hardships experienced by African Americans and to keep the community unified for shared success.

The SBNR group presents a challenging array of problems for spiritual formation if the church continues to place high importance upon direct participation and observation as a means to conveying the essential tenets of the Christian faith. The data confirms that SBNR persons are less present in our corporate worship services and spiritual development events. They are not present and therefore cannot participate or observe the communal rituals that connect people to the faith. Sociologist Robert Bellah suggests that “the claim to be SBNR is rooted in a genuine desire to hold individual convictions authentically, but that this inevitably devolves into the religion of “Sheila-ism” or “Jana-ism” or of any one of us, singly.”<sup>50</sup>

When spiritual formation is not emphasized, there is the risk of disconnecting African American Baptist Churches from the rich history of social, evangelical, and contemplative progress accomplished from emancipation well into the twenty-first century. Bond says that Black Baptist history must expand beyond just a few well known personalities, such as Martin Luther King Jr., and his circle of emissaries. There is “a new call to expand the Baptist canon invites us to recast – choosing a new set of characters and/or presenting – a black Baptist history

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<sup>49</sup> Adam L Bond, “Recasting a Black Baptist Narrative,” *American Baptist Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 2 (2013): 156.

<sup>50</sup> Jana Marguerite Bennett, “What Faith Formation Means in the Age of ‘Nones’,” *Liturgy*, vol. 30, no.3 (2015): 48.



that encompasses more heroes, events, and beliefs.”<sup>51</sup> John Szwed expresses the same concern saying “it is a sad fact that we have better descriptions – incomplete as they are – of religious beliefs and practices in West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean than we have of Black people in the United States.”<sup>52</sup> There is a pressing need to revive Black Baptist history in order to identify leaders, eras, and events that generated spiritual energy and direction for African American Baptist churches. The revival of Black Baptist history is critical because “people who have been marginalized cannot afford to take a position of voluntary ignorance with regard to not only their own story, but also the story which is promulgated by dominant communities as *the* history.”<sup>53</sup> Spiritual formation that is well grounded in Black Baptist history allows what Mitchell calls “historical inquiry” to nurture and inform our faith by answering many questions African American Baptists have about their Christian faith.

The use of historical inquiry has “helped African-American Christians answer the question as to whether Black slaves understood Christianity as the religion of the white man. Historical inquiry has determined that the slaves did not simply adopt the religion of their oppressors, but that they made Christianity their own.”<sup>54</sup> Understanding the “spiritual” ability of African American Baptists to connect required adaptations of Christianity to meet the needs of the Black community is essential for cultivating spiritual development within the church. The connection of African Americans to Black Baptist history empowers the church to grow spiritually and to live and walk in faith by following the examples set by foreparents in the Baptist tradition. Our connection to and understanding of Black Baptist history “involves re-

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<sup>51</sup> Bond, *Recasting a Black Baptist Narrative*, 150.

<sup>52</sup> Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, “Towards a Topology of a Response to Racial Stratification.” in *African-American Religion: Interpretative Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 259.

<sup>53</sup> Beverly Eileen Mitchell, “The Importance of Historical Inquiry for African American Ministry,” *American Baptist Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 2 (2013): 137-138.

<sup>54</sup> Mitchell, *The Importance of Historical Inquiry*, 142.

examination of the past in order to bring to light that which has been hidden or lost, such inquiry will also shed light on what we must be and do for the future.”<sup>55</sup>

African American Baptist Churches risk losing the opportunity to nurture spiritual imagination and spiritual maturity in the present generation of youth and young adults when spiritual formation is not given deliberate planning and focus. Spiritual formation often requires person-to-person contact where personal relationships are developed and nurtured. This is especially true for youth and young adults. Pew Research Center data reveals:

Young adults are far more likely than older people to have searched online for information about a new congregation. Indeed, 59% of adults under 30 say they have incorporated online searches when looking for a new congregation, compared with just 12% of those ages 65 and older. Still, like their elders, young people are more apt to have attended worship services at congregations they were considering and to have talked with congregation members than they are to have looked for information about congregations online.<sup>56</sup>

These findings suggest several things concerning spiritual formation and interactions with young adults. First, even with technology at their disposal, young adults still visit churches in person to assess whether they feel they are welcomed in a congregation. A congregation that does not display genuine love and care for youth and young adults will not be able to engage them in any successful form of spiritual formation. Second, youth and young adults research potential congregations initially with their interest in the “worship participation and engagement” of the church. They observe the worship ritual, listen to the sermon, and desire to experience some form of connection with the congregation before they are prepared to commit their time to the church on a regular basis.

This thesis will evaluate and juxtapose the tension in the approach to Christian spiritual formation that exists between the social, evangelical, and contemplative approaches evident and in operation in the African American Baptist tradition. Each approach to spiritual formation

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>56</sup> Pew Research Center. “Choosing a New Church or House of Worship” <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/choosing-a-new-church-or-house-of-worship/> (accessed November 16, 2017).

offers its own fundamental precepts from Christian Scripture, tradition, and doctrine and guides spiritual development towards a specific destination or purpose. This study will define the terms “social, evangelical, and contemplative” spirituality and how these approaches to spiritual formation among African American Baptists have developed over time and their influence in the Baptist tradition. It will also investigate how Christian faith has been communicated in various forms (oral traditions, biblical exegesis, rituals, and spiritual exercises and practices) and the effect these forms have in the spiritual development of congregations. The primary context for this research is African American Baptist churches; however, it will be drawing upon literary resources from the wider scope of Baptists in America and American Christianity. It will use social, evangelical, and contemplative approaches to Christian spirituality within a typological framework for defining pastoral tools which can be useful for effective spiritual development in the congregation.

Chapter 1 has displayed the many ways Christian spiritual formation has been defined over time among Baptists and in different Christian faith traditions. Several theologians conclude that Christian spiritual formation is vital for the church to fulfill its commission to teach, preach, and baptize new disciples as followers of Jesus Christ. Spiritual formation is not a process completed in a vacuum, but culture has formative influences on the church and community also. There are implicit and explicit elements at work during the spiritual formation process, which teach about God and our relationship with God. Definitions of spiritual formation cover the ideas that are taught and the habits and practices that are embodied.

In Chapter 2, this study will look at the historical roots of African American Baptist spirituality. It will consider the forms of expression spiritual formation took among African American Baptists at the turn of the twentieth century through the late 1960s. Chapter 2 will

present churches and organizations which model the social, evangelical, and contemplative spiritual formation types and will include the theological basis and hermeneutical approach each used for creating ministries, programs, social services, and social activism. The African American population was less than fifty years removed from enslavement and involved in a great social migration from the South to the North. African American Baptist churches were uniquely designed and positioned to address the needs of the community during this time.

Chapter 3 will take a contemporary view of African American Baptist churches and organizations that reflect the spiritual formation types and the different ways the types guided ministry development and community involvement. Chapter 3 will focus on how the churches and organizations embodied and communicated their spiritual values internally within the church and externally in the community and world.

And Chapter 4 will discuss the strengths and weaknesses in each spiritual formation type, as well as the strengths and weaknesses they share. Chapter 4 will include a discussion of biblical leadership motifs of prophet, priest, and king, and how these motifs compare with the African American Baptist Spiritual Formation types. The spiritual formation types will also be placed in conversation with contemporary leadership management models and strategies in order to identify leadership strengths and weaknesses for pastoral leaders and organizations. And last, there is a conclusion with recommendations concerning how African American Baptist spirituality can progress beyond this study.

## 2. The Road Traveled – Historical Roots of African American Baptist Spirituality

Jesus Christ is yet to reign in this land. I will not see it, you will not see it, but it is coming all the same. In the growth of Christianity, true, real, genuine Christianity in this land, I see the promise of better things for us as a race.<sup>1</sup>

A means to observe, compare/contrast, and evaluate African American Baptist spirituality is to create a typological framework in which to assemble the various characteristics and activities in operation among African American Baptists in their churches and organizations. The typology described in Chapter 2 seeks to define African American Baptist spirituality in ways that differentiates how spirituality is drawn out of Christian Scriptures, implemented into ministries and activities, and absorbed into practices of theological reflection. Chapter 2 places spirituality into three types: social, evangelical, and contemplative. In Chapter 1, a definitive definition for spirituality remained elusive and partial, at best case. African American Baptist spirituality is much broader and deeper in scope and cannot be adequately described in only three types; however, for the purposes of this study, the focus on spirituality will be narrowed to these three types.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter 2, the importance of the African American Baptist spiritual, social, and educational journey in history will be emphasized. Their freedom from enslavement provided new opportunities for their growth in all areas of society previously denied to them. African

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<sup>1</sup> Francis J. Grimke, *The Works of Francis F. Grimke*, ed. Carter G. Woodson, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1942), 1:291.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the ideal type was developed by German sociologist Max Weber, who used it as an analytic tool for his historical studies. Some writers confine the use of ideal types to general phenomena that recur in different times and places (e.g., bureaucracy), although Weber also used them for historically unique occurrences (e.g., his famous Protestant ethic). Ideal type, a common mental construct in the social sciences derived from observable reality although not conforming to it in detail because of deliberate simplification and exaggeration. It is not ideal in the sense that it is excellent, nor is it an average; it is, rather, a constructed ideal used to approximate reality by selecting and accentuating certain elements. Garrett Albert Duncan, "Ideal type" *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Published June 20, 2017 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideal-type> (accessed February 28, 2018).

American Baptists formed churches, organizations, businesses, founded colleges and universities, and participated in politics. African American Baptist churches and religious organizations were paramount in providing the spiritual foundation which was necessary to help African Americans meet the challenges they faced in their changing world. Chapter 2 describes the religious, social, economic, and political landscape during the early twentieth century into the late 1960s and their impact on African American Baptist spirituality.

### ***2.1. Social Spirituality and African American Baptist Social Reformers***

During the post-emancipation period well into the mid twenty-first century, African American Baptists yearned for social and political strength and identity. The effects of slavery left African Americans in rural poverty with little or no access to education, economic resources, or political power. African Americans placed great hope in the Black Church to provide the leadership in fulfilling all of the social needs of the Black community and to address the inequalities they faced on a regular basis. The population shift of large numbers of African Americans from the south to the north during the start of the twentieth century, known as the Great Migration, “created new ideas about the social and political needs of African Americans.”<sup>3</sup> The Great Migration created a new complex set of problems for African American clergy to address, such as unemployment, overcrowded housing, and the challenges of understanding the forms social empowerment would take within urban environments.

Many Blacks in the south viewed the north and Harlem in particular, as the “promised land” which offered more opportunities of freedom and security. Harlem was the magnet:

Between the late nineteenth century and the mid-1930s, Harlem, New York was the destination of choice for masses of people on the wrong side of a global color line. The Harlem Renaissance was birthed in the course of an increasing black mobility, most notably the Great Migration.

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<sup>3</sup> Bond, *Recasting a Black Baptist Narrative*, 155.

Masses of blacks converged upon Harlem from colonized parts of the Caribbean and the southern United States. Some scholars describe the migration figuratively, as a move from medieval to the modern. Most blacks remained in the southern states, but those who joined the migration of the early twentieth century were doing so for a number of reasons: they were fleeing from southern farm fields and leaving the land of perpetual white terrorism, dehumanization, and the lynch law in pursuit of a truer democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the migrants had little idea of what life would be like in the northern states, but they were willing to venture out in faith toward a new future.

The Great Migration put tremendous pressure on northern cities, which were not prepared to accommodate such large numbers of people. There was overcrowding and high unemployment, just to name a few of the community problems, but scholars also acknowledge that the Great Migration led into an era of community renaissance. Instead of imploding under the weight of the Great Migration, Harlem thrived across many areas of the Black community.

The movement to Harlem for African Americans was more than just a physical relocation:

In the *New Negro*, [Alain] Locke and his authors describe the movement as a transition from the myth of the Negro to the actualization of a real people. The Great Migration coincided with this actualization in what became the Harlem Renaissance. Both the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance embodied hope that mobilized a transition from an abstract representation by oppressive political powers of colored people as fictional characters in a worldwide narrative of white supremacy to an authentic representation of the global “colored” world. The Harlem Renaissance saw a proliferation of music, art, and literature that coincided with the developing political and theological black self-understanding in the formation of black culture from the Harlem community in Manhattan.<sup>5</sup>

The religious community was also impacted due to the expansion of the cultural arts. In no small measure, “the Christianity of the Harlem Renaissance was a theological manifestation, post-Civil War, pre-civil rights movement that identified Jesus with the oppressed rather than with the oppressors, in a critical interrogation of the notions of God and humanity embedded within the

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<sup>4</sup> Reggie L. Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 36.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*, 37.

modern imperialist union of race and religion.”<sup>6</sup> African American Baptists were also empowered theologically to practice their belief of equality in society and in the eyes of God.

A framework in which to view the social spirituality of African American Baptists during the early to mid-twentieth century would include a look at a Baptist Church in operation on the local level within its community and also to observe what African American Baptists were doing collectively through organizations on the national level. The Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, NY and the Progressive National Convention, Inc. are two groups that demonstrate social spirituality in action through their hermeneutics of Christian Scripture, the guiding principles of the leaders that influenced their organizations, and the social and political impact the church and organization had during this specific time in history.

### **2.1.1. Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem, NY and Adam Clayton Powell Sr.**

The Abyssinian Baptist Church possessed deep connections with the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance. There are estimates that over three hundred and fifty thousand Blacks from the south migrated to the north in one year alone, with approximately one hundred thousand persons arriving in New York City, primarily in Harlem. During that time, the Abyssinian Baptist Church was one of the churches that could claim that “there was hardly a member in Abyssinian Church who could not count one or more relatives among the new arrivals.”<sup>7</sup>

The Abyssinian Baptist Church was organized in 1809 by fifteen Black members of the First Baptist Church, who requested letters of dismissal in order to form their own congregation. In their letter, dated June 26, 1809, the Black members requested that fellowship with First Baptist and other Baptist churches not become broken:

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> A. Clayton Powell, Sr. *Against the Tide: An Autobiography* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1938), 70.



Dear Brethren, should you see cause to grant our request we should still feel it our privilege to look up to you for instruction, that through Sovereign Power and Electing Love we may be found steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

It is uncertain why the Black members decided to separate from First Baptist during this particular time but there were growing tensions over the issue of Christians owning slaves. Slavery was legal in New York until January 1, 1827.<sup>9</sup> However, there was pressure rising in congregations in which Blacks and Whites worshipped together to address the social issue of slavery; “abolitionist impulses growing out of the revivals led some to openly and vigorously deny Christianity’s compatibility with slavery. Since it was still legal in New York, however, church members were within their rights to keep slaves until the gradual emancipation laws mandated their release.”<sup>10</sup>

Several members of First Baptist Church did own slaves, however, in order to remain as members in good standing, slave-holding members promised to abide by the laws of manumission, to grant slaves their freedom as soon as possible. The policy was riddled with inconsistencies, controversies, and exceptions that appeared to sideline or avoid the issue as much as possible. A major exception to the policy excluded the pastor, Reverend William Parkinson, due to the fact that his wife owned one slave. She inherited the slave and could not release her:

Mrs. Parkinson had received the slave as a part of inheritance, but by law could not ‘be rid of the slave without selling her.’ It was finally resolved that ‘our Pastor Elder Wm Parkinson be exculpated from all censure as a slaveholder, that after investigation it plainly appeared that the slave legally in his possession was virtually the property of his wife.’ Since the only way to

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<sup>8</sup> Genna Rae McNeil, Houston Bryan Roberson, Quinton Hosford Dixie, Kevin McGruder, *Witness: Two Hundred of African-American Faith and Practice at the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, New York* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 6.

<sup>9</sup> The Fourth of July 1827 is Emancipation Day in the state of New York. New York passed a gradual emancipation act in 1799, which freed no slaves but provided that children born after July 4, 1799, would become free at twenty-eight years of age if male and twenty-five if female. An 1817 statute went further, declaring that all slaves born before July 4, 1799, were to be free after July 3, 1827. *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 185.

<sup>10</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 9.

dispose of the slave was to traffic in human themselves, the Parkinsons were exempt from any future resolutions concerning slaves.<sup>11</sup>

The desire for self-governance in the church, as well as the slow pace of emancipation for Blacks still in slavery were contributing factors for the establishment of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. The church's earliest history show their involvement and leadership with the social issues affecting both free and enslaved African Americans living in New York.

Abyssinian's earliest worship locations and church properties were not located in Harlem. Initially, the members secured a property on Anthony Street, near Broadway then moved to 166 Waverly Place in Greenwich Village, where they remained for forty years. A vision to relocate the church northward to Harlem was first expressed by Reverend Robert D. Wynn in the late 1890's. There was steady migration of Black residents from downtown towards Harlem and Reverend Wynn sensed the need for Abyssinian to move in order to meet the needs of the people. There was little enthusiasm among the congregation or financial resources to relocate at the time. The issue of relocating to Harlem was an important matter to Reverend Wynn and in 1901 he "declared what he insisted flesh and blood had not revealed: God is calling us to move to Harlem. Abyssinian Baptist Church is to take its witness beyond the 'Tenderloin [district] and San Juan Hill [district], all the way to Harlem."<sup>12</sup> The congregation was unmoved by his vision and Reverend Wynn was unwavering in his conviction that the relocation was a directive from God. Reverend Wynn resigned as pastor because he viewed "Abyssinian's refusal to move to Harlem was disobedience to God. In this rebelliousness and retrogressive thinking, he would have no part."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

Renewed interest in the Harlem relocation did not occur until the arrival of Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Sr. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the population of Blacks continued to grow in the Harlem area and several denominations were providing services and tent revivals in vacant lots. Reverend Powell, like Reverend Wynn, envisioned the church moving northward to Harlem. Reverend Powell saw that “it was apparent as early as 1911 that Harlem would be the final destination of the Abyssinian Church.”<sup>14</sup> After years of preaching his vision for Abyssinian, in April 1920, the church purchased lots in Harlem on 138<sup>th</sup> Street near Seventh Avenue where the new church building and Community House would be constructed.

During Powell’s leadership, Abyssinian thrived at providing ministries that focused on the social needs of the community. A few of these included the Community House, which provided “a gymnasium, shower baths, reading rooms, rooms for teaching cooking, sewing and nursing, a model dining room and a roof garden.”<sup>15</sup> Powell stated that “we were conducting classes in physical education, elementary English, citizenship and our system of government, designing and dressmaking, home nursing, typewriting and shorthand as well as a school of dramatic art directed by Richard B. Harrison of “Green Pastures” fame.”<sup>16</sup> Williams explains “Powell’s black Baptist sensibilities saw social and political action on behalf of the oppressed as a sacred and core Christian responsibility.”<sup>17</sup> In every area of life, Powell saw the church as the vehicle to provide social support and racial uplift for the African American community.

Additional social services sponsored by Abyssinian included the Highway and Hedges Society, the Old Folks Home (Home for the Aged), the Free Food Kitchen, and the Unemployment Relief Fund. Abyssinian was a social and financial engine for the Harlem

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<sup>14</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 100.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>16</sup> Powell, *Against the Tide*, 158.

<sup>17</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, 78.

community but also supported medical and educational funds throughout the country. They made significant financial contributions to the Medical Center of New York, Virginia Union, Fisk, National Training School for Women and Girls at Washington, DC, and the Tuskegee-Hampton Endowment Fund. Powell stated that “no church was allowed to buy or build in Harlem without the financial assistance of Abyssinia. At the same time we were supporting the largest social, religious and educational program ever launched by a colored church.”<sup>18</sup> During the time of his leadership, Abyssinian was described as the largest Baptist Church in the country during the time of the construction of its new sanctuary in 1921.<sup>19</sup>

Abyssinian’s social outreach was demonstrated on a massive scale for an African American Baptist congregation. For example, according to Powell’s autobiography, The Free Food Kitchen, on Easter Sunday in 1931 led by “A. Clayton Powell Jr. with the assistance of a staff of fifty workers, organized and directed the largest relief bureau ever set up by colored people. The food kitchen served 28,500 meals, sent out 525 baskets containing 2,125 free dinners, gave away 1,530 pieces of bread and pastry, distributed 17,928 pieces of clothing and 2,000 pairs of shoes.”<sup>20</sup>

During a terrible winter in 1931, when thousands of workers were being laid off, the Employment Bureau secured 633 positions. Powell made sure that

each Sunday the congregation was asked to report to the agency any jobs it might hear of, and the agency passed the job on to the jobless. Because of this continued co-operation between the church office and the congregation, Abyssinians have not suffered as seriously from the unemployment situation as some others.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Powell, *Against the Tide*, 158.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

In his autobiography, Powell described his philosophy of social change, which involved the Baptist Church concentrating its energies in creating equal opportunities in education, industry, economic and political advancement for Blacks. His philosophy was cultivated over twenty-five years of ministry with great success. He notes,

this philosophy will work if both races will let it. We have tried it at Abyssinian Church for more than a quarter century, and it is working. One of the chief objectives of the church is to cultivate a more sympathetic relationship between races, and I believe that the church has accomplished more in this direction than any other colored institution in America.<sup>22</sup>

Powell was able to perceive the social needs of an expanding and thriving Harlem community just as the Harlem Renaissance was taking shape and apply a theological hermeneutic within which the church could provide its response to its rapidly changing social environment. It can be argued that “collectively, Harlem shared in a global experience of racialization that filtered their communal interpretations of salvation and redemption according to the social positioning of black people in a white racist world.”<sup>23</sup> Powell’s approach to social spirituality attempted to discern the multi-dimensional social obstacles and frustrations encountered by African Americans in pursuit of freedom from racial discrimination, access to quality education, living-wage employment, and safe housing. Furthermore “some scholars describe a ‘mental grid’ as a complex process of filtering all of our learning through the experience of our social identity. Theologically the mental grid includes one social environment in the process of determining individual and communal ways of knowing God.”<sup>24</sup>

Prior to serving Abyssinian, while serving as pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church of New Hartford, CT, Powell’s sermons reflected his hermeneutical perspective concerning the role of the church. Archives of his sermons display that “Powell understood Christian discipleship to

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<sup>22</sup> Powell, *Against the Tide*, 190.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, 78.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 79; James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 48.

include a this-world pursuit of justice: ‘therefore, do not ask what we shall eat or what we shall drink or wherewithal we shall be clothed, but seek ye first the enforcement of the Constitution and its rightness and all these things shall be added unto you’.”<sup>25</sup>

The social view of spiritual formation or social spirituality is focused on connecting Christian faith with social, political, and economic uplift, justice and equality. The Great Migration was only one of the factors that impacted social spirituality in the African American community. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, social reformers like Lyman Abbott, Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, and Walter Rauschenbusch were charting the urban landscape with programs designed to redeem not only individuals but society itself. These reformers “argued that advancing the kingdom of God on earth meant directing attention to the actual living and working conditions of individuals and families.”<sup>26</sup> Rauschenbusch’s work in New York City did not go unnoticed by African American Baptist clergy, who would follow him in the 1910s through the 1970s. These leaders included Adam Clayton Powell Sr. and Martin Luther King Jr. to name a few.

The influence of the Social Gospel had significant impact on Powell long before he arrived in New York. According to Abyssinian Church historians, “while still pastoring at Immanuel Baptist Church in Connecticut, Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., had become one of the first African American Baptist clergymen to embrace the Social Gospel. From Powell’s perspective, the Social Gospel had a challenging ecumenical meaning for all churches, and a specific cultural meaning for black churches in their various settings.”<sup>27</sup> Powell and other African American clergy did observe that there was an obvious shortcoming in the Social Gospel message:

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, 81. Adam Clayton Powell, “The Negro North and South,” sermon delivered at Immanuel Baptist Church Circa 1893-1903, Abyssinian Baptist Church Archives.

<sup>26</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

White writers enunciating the tenets of the Social Gospel insisted that Christians had an obligation to wage the battle for human welfare and social progress through the church as well as secular institutions, agencies, and organizations. The Social Gospel, however, included no imperative that white Christians wage battle for the welfare and progress of blacks.<sup>28</sup>

Powell saw the gaps in the implementation of the Social Gospel that exclude certain people based upon race and developed his own strategies to address the specific social necessities of his community. What was obvious to African Americans was not so apparent to everyone because “Most liberal whites failed to see white supremacy as a matter for Christian attention, and a consequence they ignored the constant dangers of daily life in America for black people. But avoiding racism was not a choice for African American Christians; it was a matter of life or death in a society organized by race and enforced by violence.”<sup>29</sup>

Powell felt spiritual kinship with fellow Baptist Walter Rauschenbusch, which can be seen in their hermeneutical approach and use of Christian Scripture. Walter Rauschenbusch saw “prayer, as well as theology, as arising from human experience. He was convinced that the experience of involvement in social reform movements awaken(s) an almost painful compassion and longing, and these feelings are more essentially Christian than most of the fears and desires of religion in the past.”<sup>30</sup> For example, in terms of a pragmatic approach to prayer, Rauschenbusch “regretted” that the Lord’s Prayer had always “been identified with ‘ecclesiastical ritual’ and purely private devotion and insisted that the Lord’s Prayer focuses on the great social theme of the kingdom of God.”<sup>31</sup> Rauschenbusch has had a significant influence on the issues of spiritual formation, social justice, and social action not only among Baptists but among leaders in other denominations in his generation. The Kingdom of God was the central

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<sup>28</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Philip LeMasters, “Walter Rauschenbusch on Prayer and Social Action,” in *Ties That Bind: Life Together in the Baptist Vision*, by Curtis W. Freeman and Gary A. Furr. (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1994), 192.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

motif of his theology and his pragmatic view of spirituality was a shift from the Reformation's objective of personal salvation to a focus on salvation for society.<sup>32</sup>

Powell's social spirituality was anchored in his understanding of Jesus' life as a model for service. When Powell was being attacked by local clergy for his focus on social programs, he said:

I can understand how people, even ministers of the Gospel can differ on political, social, and moral questions, but I cannot for the life of me understand how anybody, especially Shepherds of Christ can fight a man because he feeds hungry people and because he advises others to feed them. Jesus never allowed anyone who followed him to go away hungry. He said as much about supplying the needs of the body as He did about supplying the needs of the soul. He commanded His first preachers to feed His sheep and lambs.<sup>33</sup>

Powell was succeeded by his son, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. as pastor of Abyssinian in 1937. At the time he became pastor, Powell Jr. was already well known as a champion for racial and social justice in New York City. He had led boycotts, rallies, and demonstrations to end discrimination in employment. Powell Jr. would later be elected to the New York City Council in 1941 and the U.S House of Representatives in 1945. Powell Jr. would continue in the pathway of executing a social gospel ministry established by his father.

### **2.1.2. The Progressive National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.**

The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) was organized in Cincinnati, OH in 1961 by former pastors and Christian leaders, representing 22 churches in 14 states from the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC). The decision of the PNBC to pull away from the NBC was based on the PNBC's rejection of the life-term office of the president, Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, and the rejection of "Jackson's conservatism, which was out of step with the progressive movement of many activist-oriented pastors, both black and white, that was

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<sup>32</sup> Donovan E. Smucker, *The Origins of Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 41.

<sup>33</sup> Powell, *Against the Tide*, 220.



sweeping across the nation.”<sup>34</sup> The National Baptist Convention was the largest and primary national organization representing African American Baptist throughout the country since its founding in 1895.

The division between the PNBC and the NBC was significant because both organizations plotted different paths toward addressing the social, political, and religious issues faced by the African American community during the mid-twentieth century. Both groups embraced Christian spirituality through different hermeneutical lenses. One of the organizing pastors of the PNBC, Reverend Marvin T. Robinson, wanted to declare that the break with the NBC was based primarily due to “the attack on Martin Luther King, Jr., Freedom Riders, Sit-ins, Congress for Racial Equality, Civil Rights, Foreign Missions, and auxiliary bodies was the cause of the rift amongst Black Baptist.”<sup>35</sup> Following the 1961 re-election of Jackson as president, “Jackson and the National Bodies Board of Directors of the NBC ousted King, Jr. from the office of Vice-President of the Baptist Training Union and Sunday School Congress. Jackson contended that King was removed due to the anti-National Baptist campaign in which he participated.”<sup>36</sup>

From its first annual meeting in Philadelphia in 1962, the PNBC has been committed to the civil rights movement. This commitment was well documented in *The Social Teachings of the Progressive Baptist Convention, Inc. Since 1961*:

The convention’s religious and social teachings were predicated upon the assumption that racial problems could be resolved in America by whites and blacks working together in an atmosphere of honesty and mutual cooperation. [The PNBC’s] social teachings have given emphasis to black political development, economic development, job training, and the strengthening of the black family.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Albert A. Avant Jr., *The Social Teachings of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. Since 1961* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The PNBC's strong connection with the Civil Rights Movement gave it a more "progressive" distinction from the more conservative National Baptist Convention. This distinction is highlighted and celebrated in the way the PNBC records its history:

As a result of this involvement from members of the Civil Rights Movement, the centerpiece of the PNBC witness became one of social justice and human liberation as a mandate of the Gospel. In essence, the PNBC became a living African American Christian organism, vibrant with energy and committed to the social gospel for the transformation of U.S. society.<sup>38</sup>

The social and racial tension for African American Baptists was not just a northern or southern regional phenomena but a national and global reality. Many African American Baptists within the National Baptist Convention were struggling with the lack of focus on and slow pace of social change engaged by the convention's leadership. It is noted that "while several ministers who remained within the National Baptist Convention opted for applying gradualism to attain racial advancement, the ministers who would become Progressive Baptists spoke in unqualified terms against this strategy. In 1961, this new spirit of leadership created the basis for a new convention and a new voice within Baptists."<sup>39</sup> The early leaders of the PNBC, predominately African American clergy, viewed civil rights as an integral part of their ministry. To champion civil rights on behalf of their communities was not understood by the pastors as "something separate from the church, rather it was the church living out what it had espoused."<sup>40</sup>

As the first president of PNBC, in his first annual address, Dr. T. M. Chambers (1961-1966) focused on the socio-political issues encountered by African American Baptists around the country. In his address, entitled "The New Look Through Biblical Binoculars in High Places," Chambers asked a rhetorical question concerning the meaning and purpose of laws created to curb civil rights related activities. His response was it is "just another move by those in certain

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<sup>38</sup> The Progressive National Convention. "History of the PNBC." <http://www.pnbc.org/History> (Accessed January 12, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

sections of the country to subject the Negro to the outmoded, outlawed, outlived, and universally unwanted institutions of slavery.”<sup>41</sup> Chambers and the PNBC were driven by an urgency of both faith and conscience to stand against social discrimination and injustice beside those who were participating in public demonstrations. In subsequent annual addresses, Chambers continued to lay and build upon PNBC foundational principles by advocating for racial freedom and by condemning public officeholders for betraying their oaths to the Constitution and God through political expediency, which caused innocent people of color to suffer injustices at the hands of mob rule and mob violence.<sup>42</sup>

From its inception, the PNBC developed its social approach to spirituality for African American Baptist churches by advocating the American dream of an integrated society by combining two traditions. The source of these two traditions include “the American liberal democratic tradition, as defined by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and the biblical tradition of the Old and New Testaments, as interpreted by Protestant liberalism and the black church.”<sup>43</sup> Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, PNBC president from 1966-1968, continued to express the PNBC objectives of an integrated society becoming a reality. Taylor believed that “his audience had the moral capacity and material resources to create a world based on the principles that they claimed they lived by.”<sup>44</sup> Some scholars have noticed that “whenever [Martin Luther] King had an occasion to speak about the virtues of America, he usually began by enthusiastically praising the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.”<sup>45</sup> King spoke of the Declaration

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<sup>41</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

of Independence as “the most eloquent and unequivocal expression of human dignity of man ever set forth in a socio-political document.”<sup>46</sup>

It must be noted the great degree of influence Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had on the founding of the Progressive National Baptist Convention and its social agenda. Though he never held a leadership position, he was always connected with PNBC’s vision and direction. During Taylor’s term of leadership, at the Annual Convention of 1967, Taylor charged “the resolution committee to go on record to re-affirm their faith in Dr. King as the moral leader of the nation.”<sup>47</sup> The PNBC also recommitted its support and confidence in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the NAACP, and the Civil Rights Movement.

King’s theological and political understandings were greatly influenced by the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, which “recognizes the fact that a person is a unity of body and soul, of nature and spirit. The fact that God created humans with bodies implies, for King, that Christians cannot ignore bodily needs, since the condition of the soul is largely dependent on the condition of the body. He also argues that the Christian church cannot ignore social problems.”<sup>48</sup>

King says:

Any religion that professes concern regarding the souls of men and fails to be concerned by the social conditions that corrupt and economic conditions that cripple the soul, is a do-nothing religion, in need of new blood. Such a religion fails to realize that man is an animal having physical and material needs.<sup>49</sup>

Taylor echoed the same sentiments of King and had the PNBC resolution committee to make notation:

that if the church could not relate to the need for better housing, better jobs, better education and a revolutionized political structure, the church itself would not only play an un-Christian role but an anti-Christian, anti-human part in the death drama of social suicide and political homicide.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 133.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Peter J. Paris, *Black Religious Leaders: Conflict in Unity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 106.

<sup>49</sup> Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 107.

<sup>50</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 48.

Martin Luther King Jr's African American Baptist roots and the influence of the social ministries of his father, King, Sr., and grandfather, A. D. Williams were his earliest exposure to the social commitments and involvements of the church. Their influence ran deep for "King's father and grandfather were not only Baptist ministers but also pioneering exponents of a distinctively African American version of the social gospel Christianity."<sup>51</sup> King had direct observation and participation in the social dimensions of church life at the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta, GA, where his family served. King's later studies at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University only re-enforced the foundation of his formative years of involvement with the social gospel in Atlanta. King's academic training helped him to incorporate academic theology with his theological roots and he was able to adopt "European-American ideological ideas that ultimately reinforced rather than undermined the African-American social gospel tradition epitomized by his father and grandfather."<sup>52</sup>

The PNBC sought, through sequential presidential leaders, to inform and empower the local Black church to embrace their role in keeping their members aware of the reality of racial injustice. Even with the forces that were against it, "it is of note that while the larger society sought to victimize Blacks, the Black Church has aimed to socialize their members into creative forms of surviving and with imaginative styles of social and political protest."<sup>53</sup> PNBC effort to impact social change was not limited to the Civil Rights Movement in America only. They were involved in protest against the war in Vietnam; apartheid in South Africa and were advocates for

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<sup>51</sup> Clayborne Carson, "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African-American Social Gospel." chap. 16 in *African-American Religion: Interpretative Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 345.

<sup>52</sup> Carson, *Martin Luther King*, 344.

<sup>53</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 84.

the release of Nelson Mandela “by continuing to keep pressure on those who imprisoned him;”<sup>54</sup> and the US embargo against Cuba. With regards to the Cuba embargo, PNBC President Dr. Bennett W. Smith stated “for a powerful nation like the United States to keep its foot on the neck of a people is inhumane.”<sup>55</sup>

The tension in the approach to spiritual formation for the evangelical type is viewed differently from the social type. Their issues surround the need to engage society with the message of salvation, which they view as the method for social change.

## **2.2. Evangelical Spirituality**

Evangelical spirituality is the axis on which the world of the earliest Baptist witnesses would turn; “it entails a revolution in their understanding of Jesus, and of one another, and of the world itself.”<sup>56</sup> There was a real tension that developed as formation and transformation evolved. Conversion marked a dramatic event in the life of the new Baptist convert and all human relationships were affected. The conversion event required dynamic response and courageous action from the convert, which was a sign that transformation had occurred.

In the earliest days of Baptist evangelism, it was said that “transformation evokes a new language and calls forth new practices; these are required both to prepare the ground for transformation and to conserve it when it does occur.”<sup>57</sup> Spiritual formation becomes the language of the soul that prompts and stirs it into action. In the same sense, he states that, “one cannot ask about spirituality without also asking about the social and structural shape of the church. More neutrally, we can distinguish ‘spiritualist’ spiritualities that bypass structure from

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<sup>54</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>56</sup> Curtis W. Freeman, James Wm. McClendon Jr., and C. Rosalee Velloso de Salva. *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1991), 23.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

‘ecclesial’ spiritualities that affirm it. To choose the latter is to require both formative structure and formational instruction.”<sup>58</sup> For Baptists, the nurture of the church was required for transformation and spiritual formation because the church provided the spiritual lens in which to interpret the events of the world society. Also the church was able to assess spiritual development in accordance to religious teachings and norms.

Evangelical spirituality in African American Baptist tradition places emphasis on “soul salvation” as the means of improving society and providing racial uplift. This form of spirituality strives to create a free and just society by promoting “a gospel of soul salvation and self-help as the solution to the world’s ills.”<sup>59</sup> The evangelical approach to spiritual formation is highlighted by emphasis on the results of salvation, which included the reality of the afterlife and final judgement of all human actions by God and a public faith demonstrated by the African American community “helping itself” to be successful in society. During the early to mid-twentieth century, African American clergy, like Reverend Dr. Joseph Harrison Jackson were strong leaders advocating an evangelical spirituality for African American Baptists.

By the mid twentieth century, there was a major shift in Baptist spirituality from a conversionist, wholistic model to a transactional model in which “God became the master planner or celestial boss who devised a program for each believer to follow.”<sup>60</sup> Emphasis on prayer also underwent a significant change. The focus of prayer shifted from personal relationship with God to prayers for the salvation for the unconverted. For example, prayers were offered for specific results and for objective institutional goals; “the applied spirituality of Baptist had become a spirituality of busy-ness.”<sup>61</sup> Baptist spirituality was driven by results that

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<sup>58</sup> Freeman, *Baptist Roots*, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Bond, *Recasting a Black Baptist Narrative*, 157.

<sup>60</sup> Hinson, *Baptist Approach to Spirituality*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

could be observed or measured in quantitative ways such as number of conversion/baptisms, congregational size, number of missionaries sent and supported, etc. Emphasis on prayer for spiritual growth was replaced with prayer for social change and reformation.

It is well documented concerning conversionist sects:

Its reaction towards the outside world is to suggest the latter is corrupted because man is corrupted. This type of sect takes no interest in programmes of social reform or in the political solution of social problems and may even be actively hostile towards them.<sup>62</sup>

Characteristics of “conversionist sects tend to be ‘other-worldly’ and apolitical in their orientation, and rely upon the willingness of the individual to undergo a process of conversion as the meaningful way to affect social transformation.”<sup>63</sup>

### **2.2.1. The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. and Joseph H. Jackson**

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC) was founded on September 28, 1895 in Atlanta, GA with the merger of three separate Black Baptist entities: The American National Baptist Convention, the Foreign Mission Convention, and the National Baptist Education Convention. African American Baptists yearned for national unity and “an aggressive home and foreign missionary program.” In addition to their strong concern for “missionary work in the America and throughout the world of oppressed people,” the organizers of the National Baptist Convention made sure “provisions were also made for the cause of education and the publication and circulation of religious literature designed to meet the needs of black Americans.”<sup>64</sup> Baptist unity did not last very long. By 1897, the unity of the NBC was under assault. The issues of debate among the leading clergypersons involved the “primacy of foreign missions as a greater

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<sup>62</sup> Baer and Singer, *Towards a Topology*, 267.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985), 80.



emphasis of the convention.”<sup>65</sup> The difficulty in maintaining convention unity when combining three different Black Baptist entities is that each group possesses differing sets of objectives and emphases. There were three major divisions and convention splits that occurred in the NBC between 1887 and 1961.

In the area of missions, education, and especially publishing and the use of Baptist literature, the previously independent Black Baptist Convention, The American Baptist Missionary Convention (ABMC), had developed relationships of cooperation with non-Black Baptist Conventions in order to share resources. The ABMC was organized in 1840 among Black Baptists living in New England and Mid-Atlantic States and “came into being as a result of many calls and requests from Africa for missionaries and means to continue the African missions commenced by the Reverend Lott Carey and other pioneer Black missionaries.”<sup>66</sup> The ABMC was the first Black Baptist Convention that had a focus on missions as a national objective. The second National Black Baptist Convention, the Western and Southern Missionary Baptist Convention was organized to cover and serve the regions of the country the ABMC could not. In 1866, these two conventions consolidated to form the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention (CABMC). By 1878, the CABMC disintegrated due to the growth of state conventions, district associations, and the “persistent and independent spirit of the General Association of the Western States and Territories, organized in 1873, and the New England Baptist Missionary Convention, organized in 1875.”<sup>67</sup>

The failure of the CABMC did not go unnoticed by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Reverend William W. Colley was a missionary to Africa (appointed by the Foreign Mission Board) and upon returning to the United States had “strong

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<sup>65</sup> Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, 85.

<sup>66</sup> Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press Inc., 1993), 64.

<sup>67</sup> Fitts, *Lott Carey Legacy*, 64.

determination to arouse his Black brethren to the urgent need for missionary work in Africa.”<sup>68</sup> After canvassing the country to garner support for a new denominational convention to address the need for missions, 150 persons, primarily clergy, met in Montgomery, Alabama to organize the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States on November 24, 1880. The Baptist Foreign Mission Convention merged with two other Black Baptist conventions to form the National Baptist Convention in 1985, but did not abandon their first love of and priority for missions.

The NBC majority of delegates desired to be more independent of white Baptist groups and to “chart their own course in the areas of missions, education, and the publication of literature responsive to the black experience.”<sup>69</sup> There was dissension in NBC for “the majority leadership believed that a separate and independent black Baptist denomination was necessary for the progress of the race.”<sup>70</sup> Debates over the issues of missions and Black Baptist independence were intense and unresolved as the end of 1897 approached. The delegates from North Carolina were very prominent in the debate:

The issue of cooperation with white Baptist was particularly sensitive to the delegates from North Carolina. The black and white Baptists of that state had developed an amenable relationship for a significant period of time.<sup>71</sup>

The delegates from North Carolina were instrumental in establishing a mini-session meeting at the Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, DC on December 16, 1897 to discuss a strategy for creating a new convention that fulfilled their missionary goals. It was from this meeting that the preliminary organization was planned and the Lott Carey Baptist Home and Foreign Mission

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<sup>68</sup> Fitts, *Lott Carey Legacy*, 65.

<sup>69</sup> Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, 85.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Convention was formally organized the following year in September 1898. The next major split in the NBC is described as such:

To be sure, the greatest cleavage within the National Baptist Convention USA, during its formative years came in 1915. All efforts to maintain unity and harmony within the convention had previously posed vexing challenges to the officials. Unlike the crisis which led to the birth of the Lott Carey Convention movement, the severe crisis of 1915 was primarily a legal problem with reference to the ownership and management of the National Baptist Publishing Board. Signs of the crisis were apparent for almost a decade before the actual separation of 1915.<sup>72</sup>

The organizers of the NBC created specialized boards to facilitate the mission of the convention to conduct home and foreign missions, education, training, and publishing activities. The boards included a Foreign Mission Board, a Home Mission Board, a Baptist Young People's Union Board (B.Y.P.U), and the National Baptist Publishing Board. The National Baptist Publishing Board was organized in 1896 and was given the exclusive right of publishing all church and Sunday School literature for the NBC. By 1911, the National Baptist Publishing Board was the largest Black publishing enterprise in the world and owned property, "a Scott's all-size Rotary Book Printing Press, the first of its kind south of the Ohio River; and employed about 150 clerks, stenographers, and skilled workers."<sup>73</sup>

Reverend R. H. Boyd, the general secretary of the National Baptist Publishing Board, argued that the original constitution of the NBC did not include a provision for the publishing board and the board's leadership and organizational structure was developed with little or no attention from the NBC, therefore it should have independent legal status from NBC control. During a decade of controversy, there were many discussions, arguments, and investigations to determine the rightful ownership and control over the National Baptist Publishing Board, which also included new policy demands from the NBC, exerting its right of control over all of the

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<sup>72</sup> Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, 90.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

boards of the convention.<sup>74</sup> In 1915, groups representing the publishing board and the NBC filed a lawsuit and found themselves in a courtroom in Chicago, IL before Judge Smith. Judge Smith's ruling, "in open court, pronounced the Boyd group [group representing the publishing board] a 'rump' convention and dissolved an injunction which they had taken out against President Elias Camp Morris and other officers of the National Baptist Convention, USA."<sup>75</sup>

Shortly after the court case was closed, members of the Boyd group met at the Salem Baptist Church of Chicago and organized the National Baptist Convention of America. "Initially, they called the new body the National Baptist Convention, Unincorporated, organized on Thursday night September 9, 1915."<sup>76</sup>

The third major division of the NBC occurred in 1961, during the presidency of Dr. Joseph Harrison Jackson. This convention split was the genesis of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC). As noted previously, the divide between the NBC and the PNBC was due to the issues of presidential tenure and discord concerning whether the NBC should take a conservative or progressive approach toward the Civil Rights Movement in America. The organizers of the PNBC advocated for a more active, progressive support of civil rights and civil rights leaders, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev Ralph David Abernathy. Dr. Jackson argued for a more gradual, conservative position concerning civil rights involvement. The schism of denominational politics and policy that divided the two conventions evolved over a long period of time and simply occurred during the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. Looking at events over time, "the formation of the ... PNBC cannot be understood apart

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<sup>74</sup> Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, 92.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 93.

from the larger historical currents. More than one hundred years of Baptist divisions and racial struggles played a critical role in shaping the divergent philosophies and commitments.”<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, it must be noted that prior to the election of J.H. Jackson in 1953, the NBC had only three presidents since 1895 and the average presidential tenure was eighteen-plus years.<sup>78</sup> According Crowther, Presidents Elias Camp Morris and Lacy Kirk Williams both died while in office and President David V. Jemison withdrew from the presidential election in 1953 due to failing eyesight.<sup>79</sup> The spirit of incumbency in the presidential office and challenges to it were evident in the NBC long before Jackson served in the office. Jackson served as the Executive Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board from 1934 until 1941 when he resigned to become Pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church of Chicago, IL, a pulpit once occupied by Lacy Kirk Williams.<sup>80</sup> Jackson had yielded the vice president-at-large election in 1947 to E.W. Perry, but in 1953 Jackson would take on his former rival and be victorious in his run for the presidency. Jackson would serve as president for the next twenty-nine years.<sup>81</sup>

Jackson’s evangelical theological approach to spirituality was forged during his early childhood in Rudyard, MS. Jackson acknowledged that his formative Christian environment in Rudyard was sectarian and unwelcoming of diverse denominational interactions. Jackson says:

Rudyard was a Baptist community; most of the large rural district churches and those in the small towns in Coahoma County were Baptists. My community represented orthodox Baptists, and I was taught and learned to believe that the Baptists were the only true religious body. Everybody who was not Baptist needed salvation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Edward R. Crowther, ““That the Rules Be Suspended”: Denominational Political Culture and Schism within the National Baptist Convention, 1895-1962.” chap. 8 in *Between Fetters and Freedom: African American Baptists since Emancipation*, ed. Edward R. Crowther and Keith Harper (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2015), 206.

<sup>78</sup> Crowther, *That the Rules Be Suspended*, 207.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Joseph H. Jackson, *Many but One: The Ecumenics of Charity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 167.

Jackson's Baptist origins and spiritual nurture provided the foundation for his desire to evangelize those from a non-Baptist Christian traditions, as well as persons who had no faith tradition at all. However, he did not maintain a sectarian view of his Christian faith throughout his life and ministry. After leaving Rudyard, he embraced an ecumenical message, which he expressed in 1964 during his involvement with the World Council of Churches:

The Christian church has the responsibility of not only saving the souls of men, but of saving men and nations from themselves by bring them into fellowship of understanding and love under God.<sup>83</sup>

In fact, Jackson believed his work with the Council strengthened, not destroyed his spiritual roots. He saw the Council's mission as the larger calling of his Baptist faith, to develop a "united Christian church with a deep concern for world peace and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ as the answer to the problems of sin and evil."<sup>84</sup> Jackson expressed his hermeneutical perspective for spiritual formation in this way:

Jesus spoke freely about a kingdom, a social order, in which men would be loved and respected because of their intrinsic value. He made no attempt at writing laws for the statute books. He did not set up rules of the state. He established principles, which if followed, would cause just laws to be made, and the rights of all people to be respected. Love was the motive for the social actions of Jesus. In the principle of love, men were to be regarded as children of God, and respected by their fellow men.<sup>85</sup>

Jackson said, "man is at his best as a member of society and as an individual creature in this vast world when he is most in harmony with God."<sup>86</sup> For Jackson, if humankind could maintain harmony or unity with God, they could experience true unity with each other. Peter Paris notes "the purpose of the unity would be for the proclamation of the gospel for the

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<sup>83</sup> Jackson, Joseph H. *Many but One*, vii.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph H. Jackson, *The Eternal Flame: The Story of a Preaching Mission in Russia* (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1956), 51.

<sup>86</sup> Jackson, *The Eternal Flame*, 53.

salvation of souls, and the form of the unity would be the fellowship produced by those working for a common goal.”<sup>87</sup>

Jackson’s view was that “the church was an instrument of the gospel, a social gospel to be sure, but its fundamental purpose was souls, not the state.”<sup>88</sup> Jackson’s view was in contrast to the message of the civil rights leaders and social reformers of his times. For Jackson the means of obtaining social justice was not accomplished by conflict and agitation but rather through a “religious prophet” who was able to inject “new spiritual and moral substance into the social order.”<sup>89</sup> According to Jackson, the prophet did not break the law in order to reform it because the prophet modeled a “higher order” of “extraordinary personal, spiritual, and moral refinement” to which the existing social should be conformed.<sup>90</sup>

Jackson’s evangelical spirituality is echoed in the way he linked human salvation with the divine judgment of nations. In language similar to the prophetic language of ancient Israel, Jackson spoke as a prophet, attempting to interpret the conditions of his times:

our needs in America are also moral and spiritual. God wills to save us but if he cannot save us with plenty he will visit us with famines, floods, and other privations that would bring us to our knees and show us we cannot make it without him.<sup>91</sup>

In a speech given in London in 1955 before the delegates at the World Baptist Alliance, Jackson urged world leaders, meeting in a Peace Summit in Geneva, to break down the chains that “fetter” the people of the world. In his speech, his evangelical approach to spirituality is seen in his appeal to soul salvation as the key to social change and justice in the world. Jackson declares:

If they open the door and let Him [Jesus Christ] in, He will fix everything. In order to bring peace, men must be dominated by a spirit of love, controlled by a passion for the victory of truth and dedicated to the ideals of social justice and spiritual well-being.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 70.

<sup>88</sup> Crowther, *That the Rules Be Suspended*, 230.

<sup>89</sup> Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 72.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> “Tragic Struggle God’s Way of Asking for Moral Content,” *Chicago Metro News*, September 15, 1973, Page 10, vol. 8, iss. 43.

### **2.3. Contemplative Spirituality**

Baptist history and experience shows the influence of a contemplative approach to spirituality beginning in the Puritan era with John Bunyan, which was “self-consciously shaped by borrowing from the medieval contemplative tradition.”<sup>93</sup> Baptists utilized the contemplative (prayer) practices of the monasteries and placed concentration on the family as the unit of society in which to cultivate spiritual practice and example. There was strong Puritan emphasis on spiritual formation through meditation, which the Baptists accepted but with the condition of prayer being voluntary, not set prayers or prayers from the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>94</sup> Voluntary prayers were essential to Baptist spirituality in both individual and corporate forms. Inner piety was of major concern for spiritual development but true religion was made manifest by a transformed lifestyle that was demonstrated in the church and society. According to Baptist John Gill, “spirituality needs the institution of the church, the locus of divine power, and the church’s observances, especially the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>95</sup> Historical foundations for Baptist spiritual formation evolved from medieval examples of personal piety to also include spiritual witness to others. In others words, spiritual formation involved a “conversion story” of one’s experiential encounter with Christ and calling or vocation of Christian witness or service.

The contemplative approach to spiritual formation is rooted in the desire to develop and nurture a rich inner spiritual life through education, prayer, and meditation. Howard Thurman and Samuel DeWitt Proctor are among the contemplative spirituality leaders who viewed this approach as effective for educating African Americans in ways to assimilate into mainstream

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<sup>92</sup> “Baptist Cheer Speech by Rev. J.H. Jackson,” Plain Dealer (Kansas City), July 29, 1955, Page 1, vol. 57, iss. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Hinson, *Baptist Approach to Spirituality*, 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



America. Contemplative spirituality in African American Baptist tradition is demonstrated and nurtured in various forms through Christian education, Prayer Meeting and Bible study, spiritual retreats, seminars, and conferences.

### **2.3.1. Howard Thurman**

Howard Thurman was born in 1899 and grew up in Daytona, FL. As a young child, he enjoyed time spent alone in nature. It was during these times and during the night that Thurman was most at peace and found space to reflect upon his most intimate and private thoughts. Thurman would not characterize his childhood in terms of his church activities but rather described himself as “spiritual.” Thurman’s spirituality is centered on the idea of unity; unity within one’s own self, unity with God, and unity with one’s neighbors and environment. He does this in the way he describes his relationship with a favorite oak tree from the days of his youth. In his autobiography, *With Head and Heart*, even in adulthood, Thurman mentioned how significant it was to meditate before this oak tree whenever he was able to return home. He says “I could reach down in the quiet places of my spirit, take out my bruises and my joys, unfold them, and talk about them. I could talk aloud to the oak tree and know that I was understood.”<sup>96</sup>

Thurman’s family had deep roots in the Christian faith. His primary influences concerning his spiritual life came from his mother, Alice, and grandmother, Nancy. His father, Saul Solomon Thurman was a large, yet soft-spoken man who worked for the Florida East Coast Railroad Company. He was often away from home several weeks at a time with the railroad so his homecoming was very important to young Howard and he looked forward to having him around the home. Thurman’s father was not an outwardly religious man nor did he attend any church in the community. His sudden illness and death created a lasting conflict Thurman had with

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<sup>96</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick, 1979), 9.

Christianity that became the focus of his spiritual life. His father died “outside” of the church and it created major problems concerning the funeral service and burial. Because Saul was not a member of the church, the Pastor refused to preach the funeral but did allow the service to take place in the church. A traveling evangelist, Reverend Sam Cromarte (a name Thurman said he would never forget) volunteered to preach during the service.<sup>97</sup>

The funeral of his father was a painful experience for Thurman. He remarks “I listened with wonderment, then anger, and finally mounting rage as Sam Cromarte preached my father into hell. This was his chance to illustrate what would happen to ‘sinners’ who died ‘out of Christ’. Under my breath I kept whispering to Mamma, ‘He didn’t know Papa, did he? Did he?’” Thurman continued to ask his mother and grandmother questions about the things that were said concerning his father but got no satisfactory reply. Frustrated and hurting, he said “finally, almost to myself, I said, ‘One thing is sure. When I grow up and become a man, I will never have anything to do with the church.’”<sup>98</sup> Eventually, Thurman would find his way back to the church after graduating from Morehouse College and Rochester Seminary. His first pastoral assignment was at the Mount Zion Baptist Church of Oberlin, OH, where Thurman said he was delighted to connect his learning and process of understanding with the real world needs of a growing congregation. Thurman said, “As I saw it, we were together engaged in an adventure of mind and spirit. Occasionally, my zeal offended their sensibilities – and they did not hesitate to let me know it.”<sup>99</sup>

Thurman probed ontological questions, questions pertaining to the metaphysical meanings of existence, the nature of being, and the relationship between concepts and categories. Using a contemplative approach, Thurman considered Christian spirituality by addressing two

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<sup>97</sup> Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 66.

primary questions. First, he asked “What is the human spirit and what does it need in order to survive and develop?” Thurman’s approach to this question was anchored in the Christian Scriptures and the teaching of Jesus, which served as a religious basis for understanding the characteristics of the Holy Spirit and the nature and yearnings of the human spirit. Second, Thurman asked “In what ways does the human mind function to cultivate Christian spirituality?” The second question allowed Thurman to apply his understanding of nature and metaphysical philosophy to formulate meditative practices and prayers which aid in “centering” human thoughts in a way that leads to spiritual wellbeing and wholeness.

According to Thurman, the human spirit is energized by the Spirit of God when it submits to or is offered to God in a deliberate self-conscious method. Human life is often in chaos because the human spirit is not in harmony with the Spirit of God. In his meditation, *The Meaning of Commitment*, Thurman notes:

Life is a responsible activity. What is true for our bodies is also true for mind and spirit. At these levels God is immediately available to us if the door is open to Him. The door is opened by yielding to Him that nerve center where we feel consent or the withholding of it most centrally. Thus, if a man makes his deliberate self-conscious intention the offering to God of his central consent and obedience, then he becomes energized by the living Spirit of the living God... There is an essential harmony in all existence, and the life of every living thing shares in it. Man co-operates with the Spirit of God by making himself open and available to it. And this fact is crucial. A man may elect not to do this and thereby create for himself many problems of inner chaos and confusion; these may or may not be assessed as such.<sup>100</sup>

Thurman emphasized that human beings have the ability to exercise free will concerning their relationship with God. However, the choices humans elect, which are contrary to unity of the human spirit with the Spirit of God, will not only create disunity but also disharmony and inner confusion.

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<sup>100</sup> Anne Spencer Thurman, *For the Inward Journey: The Writings of Howard Thurman* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984), 16-17.

For Thurman spiritual formation is associated with an inner process of the spirit which occurs when we inhabit a personal sacred space with God. No one is able to lead us there. We navigate that space on our own. In *The Light of His Spirit*, he states:

There is no way to balance the debt we owe to the spirit which he [Jesus of Nazareth] let loose in the world. It is upon this that we meditate now in the gathering quietness. Each of us, in his own way, finds the stairs leading to the Holy Place. We gather in our hands the fragments of our lives, searching eagerly for some creative synthesis, some wholeness, some all-encompassing unity, capable of stilling the tempests within us and quieting all inner turbulence of our fears. We seek to walk in our own path which opens up before us, made clear by the light of his spirit and the radiance which casts all around us. We join him in the almighty trust that God is our Father and we are His children living under the shadow of His Spirit.<sup>101</sup>

Spiritual formation is something which occurs in the inner portion of our being and produces the results of peace, love, and unity in our lives and environment. Thurman believed that the energized human spirit illuminated the mind by removing many of the issues which caused the mind distress.

Thurman viewed religion as comprised of two parts. First there was the “inwardness of religion” which was defined as the “dynamic encounter between man and God through the experience of prayer and human suffering.”<sup>102</sup> For Thurman, prayer was “the method by which an individual makes his way to the quiet temple within his own spirit and the *activity* of his spirit within its walls.”<sup>103</sup> Second, there is the outwardness of religion which manifests in the lives of individuals by “altering ingrained behavior patterns as the new life takes hold and spreads its influence through all of living.”<sup>104</sup> For Thurman it was not possible for the spiritual formation process to reach a definite climax because nourishment for the mind and spirit continued to invite new experiences for the spirit and new questions for the mind. In his meditation, *No Experience Contains All*, Thurman says “There is ever the hope that what the mind searches for

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<sup>101</sup> Howard Thurman, *The Inward Journey* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 126.

<sup>102</sup> Thurman, *Head and Heart*, 226.

<sup>103</sup> Howard Thurman, *Howard Thurman: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 57.

<sup>104</sup> Thurman, *Head and Heart*, 227.

today, but does not quite succeed in finding, will be its strength and stay tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.”<sup>105</sup>

Thurman believed the nurture of the mind and spirit required focused and patient effort. In his meditation, *The Daily Tempest*, Thurman expressed that “It takes time to cultivate the mind. It takes time to grow in wisdom. It takes time to savor the qualities of living. It takes time to feel one’s way into one’s self. It takes time to walk with God.”<sup>106</sup> For contemplative spiritual formation to take place, an inner journey had to take place. In *The Inward Sea*, Thurman felt:

There is in every person an inward sea, and in that sea there is an island and on that island there is an altar and standing guard before that altar is the “angel with the flaming sword.” Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon that altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing passes “the angel with the flaming sword” to be placed upon your altar unless it be a part of “the fluid area of your consent.” This is your crucial link with the eternal.<sup>107</sup>

Without making a direct reference to the Garden of Eden expulsion in Genesis 3:24, Thurman invokes the image and purpose of the Cherubims with flaming swords standing guard over the tree of life. Thurman gives individuals authority over their spiritual life in the same way as the Cherubims have over the tree of life. The human spirit is empowered with life and must be guarded.

### **2.3.2. Samuel DeWitt Proctor**

Samuel DeWitt Proctor’s (1921-1981) genealogy played a strong role in influencing his strong love for education, even at an early age. His paternal grandmother, Hattie Ann Virginia Fisher, was born enslaved around 1855 on a small tobacco plantation on the James River not far from Richmond, VA. She was described as a hard worker and was among a very small minority of slaves who learned how to read and write. In fact, she was the only slave on the Fisher

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<sup>105</sup> Thurman, Anne Spencer, *For the Inward Journey*, 21.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>107</sup> Thurman, *Essential Writings*, 137.

plantation permitted to learn to read.<sup>108</sup> Following Emancipation, at the age of eighteen years old, Hattie left the Fisher plantation and traveled eighty miles down the James River to Hampton, VA to attend “General Armstrong’s school,” which was later known as Hampton Institute.<sup>109</sup> She embraced her new world of freedom by studying literature and the sciences, in addition to becoming a superb seamstress. She graduated from Hampton in 1882, resettled with her family from the Fisher plantation in Norfolk, VA, and started a career as a school teacher in a segregated schoolhouse.

Soon after graduation, Hattie met and married George Proctor, an itinerant musician and barber, who had also experienced a life of enslavement in North Carolina. Their family grew to include eight children and they had a modest life together. George Proctor died suddenly and Hattie was left to support her family on a school teacher’s salary. No setback or hardship prevented Hattie from nurturing her children’s education and future. She made sure that each of her children graduated from high school and some of them received education beyond high school. She had a love for music and all of her children read music and played instruments well. Samuel Proctor’s father, Herbert, “played the piano, violin, and clarinet. [One of Herbert’s] sisters played the violin and a brother the trombone. All played in public concerts with various orchestras and bands.”<sup>110</sup>

In her senior years, Hattie lived in the home with Samuel Proctor, his parents, and his sister and brothers. As a child, Samuel Proctor would marvel at how his grandmother destroyed the stereotypes of formerly enslaved Blacks:

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<sup>108</sup> Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (New York: G. P. Putnum's Sons, 1995), 3.

<sup>109</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

She was highly refined and poised. Her speech was perfect, her spelling and penmanship flawless, and her expectations of her children and grandchildren demanding. [She] had a frightening piety about her. She was never tentative or ambiguous about anything.<sup>111</sup>

Proctor's grandmother was a model of success achieved through education and she established high expectations for all who followed her. She embodied faith and confidence in the fact that "God created all people; any inequalities among us were due to unequal opportunities."<sup>112</sup> She possessed a faith in God that affirmed that God was always at work in helping us to succeed in life; however, we were still responsible for doing our part as well. Before Proctor was able to attend school, he was allowed to sit in the rear of "Mrs. Proctor's" classroom while she taught. He marveled at how she maintained not only the ultimate control of the student's behavior but also how she guided the outlook for their future.<sup>113</sup> Hattie Ann Fisher Proctor laid the foundation for a love of education and the pursuit to achieve the "freedom of the mind" that Samuel Proctor would treasure and embrace throughout his life. From her legacy and within less than a century, Proctor was extremely proud of being among the "over one hundred descendants who are college-trained, many of them holding professional degrees."<sup>114</sup>

Proctor enjoyed a comfortable and shielded childhood surrounded by a nurturing close-knit family, a strong network of neighbors, school teachers, and community leaders, in addition to a life built upon church relationships and a host of religious activities. For Proctor, it was the norm to be identified by your family relationships first, then by where one attended church. Proctor's maternal great grandfather, Zechariah Hughes, was born enslaved in Gloucester County Virginia but *his* father purchased their family's freedom. Hughes became a preacher and moved his congregation from Gloucester to Norfolk, where he built two churches. It was noted

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<sup>111</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 2.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

that he was “an enterprising man who had eleven children by two successive wives; he made sure all were educated, and all became achievers – ministers, businessmen, choir leaders, and teachers.”<sup>115</sup> As a youth, Proctor was constantly reminded of his family’s heritage and the great expectations concerning his behavior, future, and success.

Gathering at church provided Proctor’s community the opportunities for both religious and social experiences. It was the most significant social hour of the community; “a time to compare clothes, exchange news, share a sad note, celebrate a new job, look for a partner in romance, exchange recipes, learn about a bargain, or pick up the name of a better doctor, tailor, or automobile mechanic.”<sup>116</sup> Even though church activities played a predominate role in his life, Proctor did not aspire to become a minister. His dream was to become a lawyer, “although [he] had never actually seen a black lawyer [at the time] anywhere at all.”<sup>117</sup> He was filled with hopes and dreams that embraced a future filled with all the things he could imagine, without limitations of racial discrimination.

Proctor’s theology was formed by his family, church, and community long before he entered seminary. He was taught to reject the idea that God made inferior persons based upon race. He would spend as much time as he could in conversations with his great-uncle Reverend Everard Hughes and Reverend D.C. Rice, pastor of the Bank Street Baptist Church of Norfolk, to gain a better view of ministry as a lifelong profession. He avoided committing to ministry as long as he could but on a certain day, when he was working in the Norfolk Naval Shipyard during a summer break from Virginia State College, he had a life-changing revelation. Until this time, Proctor did not have a clear understanding of what he wanted to do with his life. But the epiphany of that day set his focus entirely on becoming a minister. He immediately quit his job,

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<sup>115</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 10.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.



to the dismay and disbelief of his coworkers. When Proctor told a fellow coworker that he was quitting his job in order to attend school to become a minister, the coworker remarked “you don’t need to go to school to be a preacher.” The coworker proceeded to cite the names of other persons who worked in the shipyard who were preachers and “never went to any school.” Proctor replied, “but I want to do it differently; I want to go to college and to seminary. I want to give it my best and be ready for any opportunity that comes.”<sup>118</sup> In the fall of 1940, Proctor enrolled at Virginia Union College in Richmond to begin his studies toward becoming a minister.

Proctor completed his formal education at Virginia Union, then went on to Crozer Theological Seminary, and finally to Boston University. During his first pastorate at the Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, RI, Proctor was able to put into practice many of the social ethics and social-change theories he had studied in seminary. Proctor’s time at the seminary was a “new awakening” and an “intellectual and spiritual bath.”<sup>119</sup> All he was able to learn about philosophy and ethics gave new enlightenment to “step out of history”, examine all of his assumptions, and “to reenter society with greater clarity and understanding.”<sup>120</sup> Proctor challenged orthodox fundamentalist views of the Bible, which he believed justified slavery, among many other evils that hindered equal rights for all citizens. At the Pond Street Baptist Church, Proctor was involved with civil rights demonstrations for fair employment practices in the state of Rhode Island and developed programs that helped Black youth through the creation of athletic leagues. He was devoted to creating social programs that connected the privileged and the least privileged Blacks through “jobs, schools, athletic leagues, and black associations.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 42.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 55.

During his ministry at Pond Street, Proctor was concerned with what he discerned as a lack of interest in education by many Black youth. Proctor believed that social programs alone would not solve all of the problems pressing down upon the Black community. He witnessed much violence in the community and resolved that the deeper issues involved education. Proctor noted, “an educated mind behaves differently, is able to canvass options, and resolve misunderstandings without violence.”<sup>122</sup> Proctor recognized that there were many great schools in the Northeast, but what his youth needed could only be nurtured in the Black colleges and universities of the South. He felt they needed “to see and hear black PhDs, black deans, black choral directors, black treasurers and presidents, black cheerleaders, and black assembly speakers. They needed a higher vision of our destiny, an ocean tide of celebrative black oratory to lift them out of the muck and mire of inferiority.”<sup>123</sup> Proctor and Pond Street Church decided to “generate a flow of young black students to attend colleges in the South,” with great success.<sup>124</sup>

Proctor’s hermeneutical perspective with respect to spiritual formation was shaped by his belief that the search for God included not only the heart, “a quest to satisfy the hunger and thirst for God’s presence, but a matter for the head, to fulfill the quest for answers to deep questions concerning creation, the human body, etc.”<sup>125</sup> For Proctor, the relationship between religion and spiritual contemplation:

portray the divine-human relationship in the light of all available knowledge, keeping it at such a level of humility, seriousness, and awe that people will pause in silent contemplation at the very thought of how great God is and how wonderfully we are made.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor. *We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1996), 15.

<sup>126</sup> Proctor, *This Ministry*, 19.

From a personal place of deep and silent spiritual contemplation, Proctor developed and preached sermons that “addressed faith, practical matters of Christian conduct, and the larger problems facing African American Christians in the United States.”<sup>127</sup>

His hermeneutical foundations were also undergirded in “three principal biblical sources: the monumental eighth century B.C.E Jewish prophets (Micah, Amos, and Isaiah), the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and in Paul’s understanding of the transforming power of Christ as the object of one’s faith.”<sup>128</sup> Proctor demanded that his sermons required his audience to bring their minds with them when they entered the church. He felt obligated to present the Bible in ways that addressed the complexity of the world. He saw “religion and education as symbiotic; each energizes the other.”<sup>129</sup>

Chapter 2 focused on the historical foundations of African American Baptist spirituality and placed it within the context of the social, evangelical, and contemplative spiritual formation types. It is important to trace the history of Baptist churches and organizations to better understand their origins and the growing pains they experienced. African American Baptist Spiritual formation was influence by the Great Migration, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Movement. African American Baptist churches’ response to these issues varied due to their hermeneutical approach to Scriptures based on their spirituality type. In Chapter 3, we will observe how the spiritual formation types are embodied by contemporary pastoral leaders and ministries to address the changing needs of African American Baptist churches and society.

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<sup>127</sup> McNeil et al., *Witness*, 278.

<sup>128</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 144.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

### **3. Spiritual Formation – “The Ground Where We Stand Today”**

God of Grace and God of Glory, on thy people pour thy power;  
Crown thine ancient church's story; bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour,  
For the facing of this hour. Harry Emerson Fosdick (1930)

African American Baptist spirituality being practiced or demonstrated in the modern world takes many forms. It is rooted in a particular hermeneutical perspective of the Bible, the continuation of valued oral and written traditions, the present and critical needs of the church and community, and the missional and eschatological objectives of the church. There is no single spiritual formation type that accurately describes an African American Baptist leader or congregation. For example, each ministry highlighted in Chapter 3 possesses characteristics found in more than one type and therefore are not mutually exclusive with respect to spiritual formation types. The inclusion or designation of a ministry within a particular spiritual formation type is made based upon the assessed focus of the ministry to engage the individual, congregation, or community in the ways that best fit within that spiritual formation type description. In cases where a ministry was very dynamic and innovative in more than one spiritual formation type, the type selected was chosen because it more closely represented the characteristics which presented the best examples for that spiritual formation type.

#### ***3.1. Social Spirituality and African American Baptist Leaders***

The pastoral leaders that embodied the African American Baptist Social spirituality type in our modern age were former presidents of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC). They are noteworthy models of social spirituality because the social, economic, and political themes they espoused as leaders of the national convention had a tangible ministerial

application in their local churches and communities. The PNBC's inaugural motto was "Fellowship, Progress, and Peace." The word "Service" was added during the 1970's. The initial motto "had more to do with individual behavior and personal ethical conduct and less to do with social transformation or socio-political changes."<sup>1</sup> It was the opinion, by the early PNBC leaders, that if the motto was embraced with "integrity and honesty," the agendas created by the convention's leadership could affect social transformation or socio-political change.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the motto, the PNBC holds Romans 12:9-21 as a guiding principle for all convention members, which encourages Christian fellowship, humility, honesty, peacefulness, doing good works, and service.<sup>3</sup>

The PNBC describes itself as "a people of faith and action," bearing the distinctions of limited "tenure in office, civil rights advocacy and activism, missions, creative leadership, leadership in cooperative Christianity and ecumenism, and generous support of worthy causes."<sup>4</sup> Within the host of "worthy causes" essential to PNBC identity, one would find:

the struggle for full voter registration, education, and participation, affirmative action against all forms of bigotry and racism. In addition, black economic empowerment and development, equal educational opportunity, freedom of religion by the restraint of all governmental authority and dictation in faith matters, conscience and the church, the abolition of South African apartheid and the realization of universal human rights and total human liberation.<sup>5</sup>

As leaders of the PNBC, J. Alfred Smith, Sr. and Charles G. Adams were in the forefront of promoting the core ideals of the convention among the over 1800 churches comprising over 2.5 million members. Each leader developed local ministries to address the specific social, economic, and political issues impacting their spheres of influence. Their ministries took a

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<sup>1</sup> Albert A. Avant Jr., *The Social Teachings of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. Since 1961* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 97.

<sup>2</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

wholistic approach to meeting the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of their congregation and communities.

### **3.1.1. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. and Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, CA**

Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. served as the president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) from 1986 through 1988. He served as the pastor of the Allen Temple Baptist Church of Oakland, CA from 1971 until his retirement in 2009. Smith began his tenure at Allen Temple during a time of great social flux in the Bay Area of California. The times are best described as “the era of the Civil Rights Movement was in its sunset years, the Black Power movement was still on the horizon and the Black Panther Party was in its infancy stage, still struggling for its “true identity.” Oakland was making national and international news as a revolutionary city in revolutionary change.”<sup>6</sup>

Smith was licensed to preach in 1948 and ordained in 1951. He is not a son of the South but a native of Kansas City, MO. He was able to observe and participate in the Civil Rights Movement from the Midwest at the time when legal victories, protest marches, and grass root organizing were at its height. In fact, when Smith began his pastorate at Allen Temple, the church was located behind the Black Panther East Oakland Headquarters<sup>7</sup> at the corner of 85th

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<sup>6</sup> Martha C. Taylor, “Allen Temple Baptist Church History,” The Allen Temple Baptist Church <https://www.allen-temple.org/about-atbc/history> (accessed February 6, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Black Panther Party, original name Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, African American revolutionary party, founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The party’s original purpose was to patrol African American neighborhoods to protect residents from acts of police brutality. In addition to challenging police brutality, the Black Panther Party launched more than 35 Survival Programs and provided community help, such as education, tuberculosis testing, legal aid, transportation assistance, ambulance service, and the manufacture and distribution of free shoes to poor people. Of particular note was the Free Breakfast for Children Program (begun in January 1969) that spread to every major American city with a Black Panther Party chapter. Garrett Albert Duncan, “Black Panther Party” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Published December 13, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party> (accessed February 8, 2018).

Avenue and East 14th Streets.<sup>8</sup> Smith found himself at the very center of the social and political struggles of his city. His immediate ministerial context required Smith to take a strong and leading position concerning civil rights and social justice. It would have been easy or convenient for Smith to avoid identification with the Black Panther Party by allowing their group to take the lead in defining and engaging the issues facing the Black community during that time. However, this would not be the case. Rather than avoiding association with the Panthers:

Smith did not alienate himself or Allen Temple from the Panther Party. Rather, a healthy rapport was established, as the Panthers and Allen Temple shared some common goals for the black community that included education, justice, peace, decent housing, employment and destiny over the Black Community. By now Allen Temple was "on the map" as a church that was grounded in Black Liberation Theology through its praxis of social action as understood by the ministry of Jesus Christ outlined in Luke 4:18.<sup>9</sup>

Smith sought organizations and groups that desired fulfilling the same goals of service and racial uplift for the Black community that he possessed. He recognized the needs of the community were larger than one organization was able to fulfill on its own. He developed partnerships with other groups throughout the community for shared ministry and success.

During his tenure as pastor, Smith saw some significant changes occurring in the community. From 1970 to 2010, the city of Oakland had an average population of 372,670 people. In 1970, African Americans comprised 34.5% of the population and that number grew to 47% during the 1980s with the growth of industrial and manufacturing jobs in the Bay Area.<sup>10</sup> The poverty rate, according to the US Census, in Oakland in 1969 was 16.6%, with the national official poverty rate<sup>11</sup> at 19%. The national trend has seen a decrease in official poverty rate

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Allen Temple History*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Bay Area Census -- City of Oakland, 2010, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Oakland.htm> (accessed February 6, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> The Official Poverty Measure was developed by Mollie Orshansky in 1963-1964 and designated as the Federal Government's official statistical definition of poverty in 1969. The initial measure determined levels of basic need, which have been updated only for inflation. The measure accounts for the cash resources available to

since the 1960s to a rate of 14.8 % in 2014; however, poverty rates are not uniform for all racial populations:

While official poverty rates have come down for the population as a whole since 1964 and the safety net is lifting tens of millions out of poverty today, some groups continue to face much higher levels of economic hardship. Official poverty rates, which allow for detailed comparisons among important population subgroups over time, have remained much higher among single-mother families, Black and Hispanic populations, those with the lowest levels of education, and among individuals and families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.<sup>12</sup>

Poverty rates among Black and Hispanic Americans average two to three times the official poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites and in 2014 the poverty rate for Black and Hispanic Americans was double the rate of non-Hispanic whites.<sup>13</sup>

The communities of Webster, Woodland, Cox, and Highland, which surrounded the Allen Temple Church, have endured high unemployment rates. The unemployment rate for Oakland, CA from 1990 to 2010 was an average of 1.5 to 2.0 percentage points higher than the national average.<sup>14</sup> Over the past decade, Oakland has experienced a high level of violent and property related crimes which exceed both the state of California and national crimes statistic averages.<sup>15</sup> During these times of poverty, unemployment, and crime, Oakland has been experiencing a cultural shift with more African Americans leaving the city. At its height, the African American population was at 47% during the 1980s but decreased by over half over the

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meet needs, but does not include non-cash benefits. In the 1960s, the federal social safety net was much smaller than today and consisted largely of cash benefit programs, most notably the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Poverty in the United States: 50-Year Trends and Safety Net Impacts*, Prepared by Ajay Chaudry, Christopher Wimer, Suzanne Macartney, Lauren Frohlich, Colin Campbell, Kendall Swenson, Don Oellerich, and Susan Hauan, March 2016, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Chaudry, et al., *Poverty*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> The Black population has had the highest official poverty rates for nearly all of the last 50 years, experiencing poverty at rates two to three times those for non-Hispanic Whites. Poverty declined steeply for Blacks in the mid-1960s, and again beginning in 1993, falling to an all-time low of 22.5 percent in 2000. Since then, the rate has climbed to 26.2 percent in 2014, rising particularly during the years of the Great Recession. Chaudry, et al., *Poverty*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Home Facts "Oakland, CA Unemployment Rates,"

<https://www.homefacts.com/unemployment/California/Alameda-County/Oakland.html> (accessed February 8, 2018)

<sup>15</sup> Home Facts "Oakland, CA Crime Rates," <https://www.homefacts.com/crime/California/Alameda-County/Oakland.html> (accessed February 8, 2018).



next three decades to only 28% in 2010.<sup>16</sup> The ethnic group that experienced increased population during this time was the Hispanics. The neighborhoods surrounding the Allen Temple Church were becoming less African American and more Hispanic.

Smith and Allen Temple addressed the social, economic, and political needs of their community in several ways. They organized and designated a number of ministries and services under the category of “Community Care.” Within this category, they created the following: AIDS Ministry, Athletic Ministry, Boy’s Rite of Passage, Evangelical and Outreach Ministry, Girl’s Rite of Passage, Global Ministries, Prison Ministry, Prophetic Justice, Recovery and Deliverance, Streets Disciples, and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).<sup>17</sup> Smith developed programs which enabled foreign-born persons to meet citizenship requirements. In addition to these efforts to provide ministry to the community, Allen Temple has also created a number of non-profit entities to expand health and social services support to their constituents.

The scriptural statement and hermeneutical approach undergirding Allen Temple’s non-profits is “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). The Mission Statement for Allen Temple’s social ministry program:

We exist to strengthen and stabilize families by assisting them to create and maintain healthy environments. We are dedicated to supporting the economically disadvantaged with education, spiritual support, and exposure to positive approaches to life.<sup>18</sup>

Allen Temple’s non-profit entities include: Anger Management and Domestic Violence Program, Bethsaida Mental Health Services, Community Nutrition and Education, Malachi Fatherhood Program, Medical Nutrition Therapy, and the Bridge Construction Program –

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Black Population: 2010: 2010 Census Briefs*, Prepared by Sonya Rastogi, Tallese D. Johnson, Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, and Malcolm P. Drewery Jr., September 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Allen Temple Baptist Church, “Ministries,” <https://www.allen-temple.org/ministries> (accessed February 8, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Allen Temple Baptist Church, “Allen Temple Health and Social Services,” <http://atwellness.org/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

Workforce Development.<sup>19</sup> Allen Temple also created and operates the Leadership Institute at Allen Temple, which includes two certificate programs (in Christian Ministry and Civil Engagement), an Emerging Leaders Program, a General Education Program (for completing the GED, studying English as a Second Language (ESL), and Computer Skills), and Pre-Apprentice Program that partners with local unions for construction jobs.<sup>20</sup> The Learning Institute shares a common thread of social awareness with the other components of Allen Temple's ministries:

The professional emphasis of these opportunities include providing a sociological understanding of community; principles of effective leadership; ethical and moral values for leaders; an introduction of theological disciplines, along with other areas relevant to community development and social change.<sup>21</sup>

The Leadership Institute has four collaborative partners: The California Endowment through the East Oakland Building Healthy Communities initiative; the Oakland Unified School District Adult Education Program; Bay Area Career Resources (BACR) of San Francisco and the Allen Temple Health and Social Services Ministry. Driver Education classes are also provided for individuals in enrolled in the pre-apprenticeship construction program held on the Leadership Institute/Allen Temple campus.<sup>22</sup>

Smith and Allen Temple were very aware and sensitive to the changing ethnic composition of their community and city. In 1988, the Reverend Ruben Hurtado joined the Allen Temple church and became the pastor of an outreach ministry focused specifically on the needs of the Hispanic community. It was through this outreach ministry that "the Iglesia Bautista de Allen Temple was birthed with Reverend Hurtado as the Pastor."<sup>23</sup> Dr. Smith was also fluent in Spanish and was able to alternate between English and Spanish in his sermons without the need

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<sup>19</sup> Allen Temple Baptist Church, *Allen Temple Health* .

<sup>20</sup> Allen Temple Baptist Church, "Leadership Institute at Allen Temple," <http://www.liatedu.org/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Allen Temple Baptist Church, *Leadership Institute*.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, *Allen Temple History*.

of a translator. His ease in the use of language had an effect of creating a greater connection of fellowship and pastoral care between Smith and the Hispanic members of his congregation.

Smith believed the church served as the vehicle for social change and moral agency for the community. He was an advocate for seniors by leading the church to sponsor 150 units of elderly housing; “persuaded Clorox Company to build a \$1.5 million youth center; and persuaded Pacific Gas and Electric Company to locate office buildings for the seniors and poor in the East Oakland area.”<sup>24</sup> The Allen Temple Church is an advocate for housing rehabilitation and economic revitalization of minority-owned businesses. The Allen Temple Credit Union has assets of over \$3.5 million and host annual money management seminars to aid persons with financial information and economic planning. By purchasing commercial property for economic development, the congregation has demonstrated that it is vested in the long range economic success of the community.

### **3.1.2. Charles G. Adams and Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit, MI**

Dr. Charles Gilchrist Adams served as president of the PNBC from 1994-1996. He has served as the pastor of the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church of Detroit, MI since April 6, 1969. Adams is a native son to both Detroit and the Hartford Church. After graduating from the University of Michigan and the Harvard Divinity School, Adams served as pastor of the Concord Baptist Church in Boston, MA for seven years prior to returning to Detroit. He was accepted at Hartford “as pastor of the church in which he had been reared, indoctrinated, baptized, licensed, ordained and married.”<sup>25</sup> Adams is only the third pastor to serve the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church since its founding in May 1917. His predecessor, Reverend Charles A. Hill, Sr. served

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<sup>24</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 122.

<sup>25</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, “About Us,” <http://hmbcdetroit.org/church-history> (accessed February 6, 2018).

the church for 48 years and established the church as a champion for equal rights. Dr. Hill made social action and advocacy a primary focus of the church:

He was a strong supporter of organized labor; UAW Ford Local 600 was organized at Hartford Church. An outspoken champion of civil rights in the difficult days before the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Hill was at the forefront of the struggle for equality in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. He was one of the first Blacks to run for the Detroit City Council. Courageously, he opened the Hartford pulpit to such nonconformists as W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson.<sup>26</sup>

Adams was following in the footsteps of a social reformer and he was called to serve a church already well versed in understanding its spiritual calling to effect socio-political and economic change. Adams served as president of the Detroit Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as his predecessor, Dr. Hill had done. Adams successfully lead the Dearborn Boycott in 1986, challenging the City of Dearborn's "racist policies and laws barring any but its own citizens to use the public parks."<sup>27</sup> The boycott led Blacks in refusing to shop in Dearborn's malls and stores. The Detroit Branch of the NAACP took the city to court and had the unjust law overturned.<sup>28</sup> The boycott received national attention from the media and was watched closely by other civil rights groups fighting against local discrimination laws.

Over the nearly five decades that Adams has served in Detroit, he has witnessed and participated in many socio-political and economic changes in his community. In contrast to the Great Migration of the early twentieth century, when large numbers of Blacks moved from the rural south to the industrial north, Detroit actually reached its peak population during the 1960s –

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<sup>26</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, "About Us," <http://hmbcdetroit.org/church-history> (accessed February 6, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Detroit, which is predominantly black, and Dearborn, which remains overwhelmingly white, have been uneasy neighbors for years. Mayor Hubbard [of Dearborn], who took office in 1942, promised his constituents that no black would ever live here. Few ever have. The 1980 census listed 83 blacks among Dearborn's 90,660 residents, while Detroit's population included 758,939 blacks, 63 percent of the 1.2 million residents. Because Dearborn and Detroit are so close and because Detroit's downtown shopping corridor has deteriorated, thousands of Detroiters, black and white, shop in Dearborn. James Barron, "Parks New Racial [*sic*] Issue in Dearborn," *New York Times*, January 19, 1986 <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/19/us/parks-new-racial-issue-in-dearborn.html>

<sup>28</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, "Pastor Adam's Journey to World Ministry," <http://hmbcdetroit.org/church-history/pastor-adams/pastor-adams-journey-to-world-ministry> (accessed February 6, 2018).

1970s and then experienced significant loss of population to the surrounding regions. The intra-regional migration patterns that led to the demise of urban Detroit were due, in part, to “direct correlation to the dismantling of the public transit system and the construction of highways.”<sup>29</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century, Detroit grew at a rate of 63%, fueled by migration from the farms to the cities and the immigrants from Eastern Europe.<sup>30</sup>

The growth and urban success of Detroit from 1910 – 1950 was supported by the automobile factories and the industries associated with automobile manufacturing, the development of the largest streetcar system in the US, and World War II wartime manufacturing. By the 1960s, the population of Detroit was in decline, as many people relocated into the suburban communities. One of the most devastating migration and financial crisis for the city occurred during the Riots of 1967. The declining population trend was initiated following WWII but the summer riots propelled the exodus from urban Detroit into overdrive. By the end of the five days of rioting, there were over 2,000 businesses destroyed (through looting or fire), 1,400 buildings burned, 7,000 people arrested, and 33 Black lives and 10 White lives were lost.<sup>31</sup> Over the next decade, 1970-80, more than 400,000 people would flee Detroit for the suburbs, taking with them small businesses and the financial resources necessary to support city services. The white population fled the city but the Black residents were trapped in urban Detroit due to discriminatory housing practices, which prevented Blacks from purchasing homes in the suburbs.

In addition to its financial crisis, the residents of Detroit suffered with poverty, increased infant mortality rates, and crime.<sup>32</sup> Entire neighborhoods of the city were abandoned, leaving

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<sup>29</sup> “Detroit Population History 1900-2000,” <https://www.somaccon.com/p469.php> (accessed February 6, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Corey Williams, “What Happened in Detroit in 1967?” *Associate Press*, <http://www.monroenews.com/news/20170722/what-happened-in-detroit-in-1967> (accessed February 9, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Among the nation’s major cities, Detroit was at or near the top of unemployment, poverty per capita, and infant mortality throughout the 1980s. Heather Ann Thompson, “Rethinking the Politics of White Flight in the Postwar City: Detroit, 1945-1980,” *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1999): 163-98.

street after street of boarded houses, vacant lots, and rusted vehicles. Urban researchers admit that the decline of Detroit was caused by a number of factors and the events impacting the city were not unique from other major US cities. The effect of deindustrialization was widespread and “every major industrial city in the urban North suffered the recession of the 1970s and deindustrialization of the 1980s—but few suffered to the extent that Detroit did.”<sup>33</sup> After the state of Illinois took over the financial and municipal management of the city in March 2013 attempts were made to restore the fiscal foundations but the damage was beyond repair. On July 18, 2013, Detroit filed Chapter 9 bankruptcy in the United States Bankruptcy Court Eastern District of Michigan with \$18.5 billion in debt.<sup>34</sup> This became the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in US history.

Adams believed that God used humans as agents to usher in “the day of racial and class equality” in the world. He focused much of his social action in the area of economic empowerment. His northwest Detroit neighborhood was devastated by the declining financial conditions in the city over many decades. It had become an environment of urban decay, abandoned buildings and factories, streets that had become public dumping grounds, and many vacant lots.<sup>35</sup> Adams and the Hartford Church had a vision for community economic redevelopment:

Today, that once vacant lot is leased to African-American entrepreneurs operating McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises. Several social services agencies and a school also use the land. The church has also broken ground on a \$17 million, 80,000 square foot shopping center that will include a supermarket, drug store and restaurant.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *Detroit*, 164.

<sup>34</sup> “City of Detroit Bankruptcy Filing,” <http://www.mieb.uscourts.gov/news/city-detroit-bankruptcy-filing> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 122.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Adams believed the issue for his community involved new businesses and job creation. The church was the entity in the Black community best able to acquire and redevelop land, build business relationships, and secure employment for displaced people in the Black community.<sup>37</sup>

The social ministry programs Adams created to address the issues in Detroit included: Social Justice Ministry, Social Service Ministry, NAACP Liaison, Athletic Ministry, Hartford Bazaar, Hartford Health Ministry, Lions Ministry, Hartford Transitional Outreach Ministry, Hartford Progressives, Hartford Agape House, Scout Programs (Boys, Girls, Cub), and the Hartford (Watson-Spears Bookstore) and Resource Center.<sup>38</sup> Adams also developed a business directory to publish existing Black-owned community businesses to generate entrepreneurial activity through church involvement and support. Several of these ministries focused on assisting persons suffering from economic distresses. For example, the Hartford Transitional Outreach Ministry, previously known as Hartford Partners for Family Unity, has programs designed to help the homeless by partnering with homeless shelters (Interim House, Peggy's Place, COTS and Simon House) to provide basic supplies, meals, clothing and personal toiletries for residents. Hartford, in partnership with Veterans House, participates in a rotational program that feeds the homeless in the greater Detroit area at First Presbyterian Church.<sup>39</sup> Hartford's concern for the homeless extends to homeless youth as well: "The ministry also piloted a project called 'Cotton Candy' which sponsored monthly birthday parties for youth in homeless shelters."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, "Hartford Memorial Baptist Church Ministries," <http://hmbcdetroit.org/ministries> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, "Hartford Transitional Outreach Ministry," <http://hmbcdetroit.org/ministries/hartford-transitional-homeless-outreach-ministry> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, "Hartford Transitional Outreach Ministry," <http://hmbcdetroit.org/ministries/hartford-transitional-homeless-outreach-ministry> (accessed February 11, 2018).

Hartford operates the Harambee Ministry, which includes a full service restaurant and catering services.<sup>41</sup> This ministry has been serving Northeast Detroit for over 20 years by creating business relationships with community businesses, employing local workers, and strengthening family relationships with time spent around the meal table.<sup>42</sup> Hartford Church, in partnership with the Lion’s Club, a global service network, provides vision care, youth mentoring and volunteering programs, and personal development and recreation activities within the community. Hartford’s healthcare ministry has “forged a partnership with the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest palliative care organization in the State of Michigan and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest organization in the US.”<sup>43</sup> Their Stephen Ministry lists one of its objectives is to provide emotional and spiritual support to persons who suffer from unemployment and job crisis events in a confidential counseling environment of support.

Adam’s hermeneutical approach to social spirituality was demonstrated in the way his ministry was directed toward racial economic empowerment. Adams had to contend with a collapsing municipal financial system, high levels of unemployment with the absence of new business prospects in the community, increased demand on the church to provide basic social services, and high crime rates that undermined community security and stability. Adams saw the church as the most stable entity in the community, capable of generating the business and social stimulus necessary for its recovery. Adams believed “the places where hope is affirmed, where values are instilled, and where truth is taught serve as buffers to a cruel world.”<sup>44</sup> It was the church’s responsibility to “develop programs that promote biblical literacy, personal integrity,

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<sup>41</sup> Harambee is a Swahili word which means literally ‘pulling or working together’ (a slogan of the first independent government of Kenya). The origin of harambee (in East Africa) involves an event held to raise funds for a charitable purpose. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/harambee> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, “Harambee Ministry,” <http://harambeehousecater.wixsite.com/1313> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, “Pastoral Care – Hospice - Palliative Care,” <http://hmbcdetroit.org/ministries/pastoral-care-overview/7> (accessed February 11, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Avant, *The Social Teachings*, 69.



African identity, moral sensitivity, and spiritual vitality, in order that children can find the path of escape” from the most destructive effects of an economic disaster.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.2. Evangelical Spirituality**

There are several characteristics which are prominent among the Evangelical Spiritual Formation type examples in Chapter 3. Each of these pastoral leaders and churches place great emphasis on ministerial activities involving evangelism by way of local and foreign missions work, use of social media to target and gain church participation from people from all age groups, and planning events that generate significant church growth in their community and surrounding areas.

#### **3.2.1. Howard-John Wesley and Alfred Street Baptist Church, Alexandria, VA**

Dr. Howard-John Wesley has served as pastor of the Alfred Street Baptist Church of Alexandria, VA since 2008. He serves an historic church founded in 1803 and is the eighth pastor. He leads a tremendously effective array of ministries:

Under Dr. Wesley’s extraordinary leadership, Alfred Street Baptist Church has grown from about 2,500 to more than 7,000 members, serving the community and members through 83 active ministries with an emphasis on children’s ministries and missions. To accommodate its favor and growth, the church holds four weekend worship services, including one on Saturday nights. As a result, Dr. Wesley has launched an initiative to redesign and expand the current sanctuary and ministry facility.<sup>46</sup>

Alfred Street Baptist Church (ASBC) has a long history of dynamic church growth. Since the 1870s through the 2010s, ASBC has maintained a trajectory of growth that has required the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, “About Pastor Wesley,” <http://www.alfredstreet.org/leaders/about-pastor-wesley/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

construction of new buildings to house their membership and ministries. For over two centuries, the ASBC has been a pillar of African American social and spiritual identity and strength.

ASBC has a full selection of ministries covering areas of Christian Education & Spiritual Enrichment, Church Family Life, Music and Worship Arts Ministry, Missions and Outreach, Well Being, and Service Ministries. The ministry organizational structures and objectives are consistent with most contemporary African American Baptist church ministries of similar type. The ministries, events, and activities at ASBC that embody the evangelical spirituality type and require greater examination include C.A.Y.A. (Come As You Are), the church's financial donation to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the "100K" Project in celebration of Pastor Wesley's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. These activities illustrate innovative approaches to evangelism which are designed to attract people to affiliation with the church and participation in its ministries.

The "Come As You Are" (CAYA) ministry is "a new radical monthly service geared towards young adults, ages 21 – 40. CAYA has made a tremendous impact on young adults in the Washington metropolitan area."<sup>47</sup> First, this ministry has significant evangelistic implications due to its name. The appeal for members, or especially visitors or seekers, to come to the church without bearing the stigmas of exclusion, is a way to make the church environment more welcoming and friendly. The broadness of the appeal allows the visitor to approach the church in whatever socio-economic, emotional, and spiritual state they find themselves. The evangelical appeal does not prejudge the individual's needs for salvation, material or physical needs, or emotional support. The appeal, by its name, is consistent with Scripture, "Then he called the

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<sup>47</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, "Church History," <http://www.alfredstreet.org/our-church/church-history/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

crowd to him along with his disciples and said: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Second, CAYA has a target audience or demographic which is a focus area of ASBC programming. The city of Alexandria, VA has one of the largest numbers of 2-person households among cities of comparable size.<sup>48</sup> This low number of household family members translates into families with fewer or no children. African Americans comprise 22.5% of the total city population of approximately 140,000 people. The population of Alexandria has a median age of 35.7 and over 60% of people over the age of 25 years old possess a bachelor’s degree.<sup>49</sup> The percent of people 65 years old and older is only 9%. This ministry context presents a unique opportunity for ASBC to attract young, urban professionals with small families or with no children. CAYA appeals to this demographic by establishing worship/Bible study/gathering times during non-traditional hours (i.e. 6 pm on Saturday evenings). Wesley also appeals to the young adults because he is also within the same age group and therefore, has a personal connection with their generation. CAYA services attract over one thousand young adults from across the Washington, DC metro area each month.

Third, CAYA makes full use of social media as an outreach evangelism tool to connect with young adults. ASBC’s use of Facebook, twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms promotes rapid communications between the church and the young adults. Not only is information published through social media to a wide audience, CAYA members can contact Wesley directly with their questions through the application, #AskHJW – Do you have a Question for Pastor Wesley?, on the church website. Wesley believes that one of the greatest

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Alexandria City, Virginia (County),” <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/alexandriacityvirginiacounty/PST120216> (accessed February 13, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts: Alexandria*.

challenges young adults face is to have a growing faith with many unanswered questions. The topics he likes to address deal with sexuality, hip-hop in Christianity, relationships, careers, biblical finances, prayer, and the “things young people want to get right now.” ASBC has an extensive selection of online videos of sermons, Bible studies, CAYA services, and Revival Services. They utilize video platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo to deliver high quality On-Demand products for the young adults. They also provide church information by ASBC text messages and E-blast.

In 2006, officials from the National Museum of African American History and Culture made an unusual request to ASBC. They requested ASBC consider becoming a founding donor by pledging \$1 million to the \$540 million museum.<sup>50</sup> If ASBC fulfilled the pledge request, it would represent the largest donation given by a faith-based organization and the largest gift ever given by the congregation to another institution.<sup>51</sup> Wesley shared the request with ASBC officers and members and received overwhelming support for the project. Financial support came from even the youngest members. A third-grader approached Wesley following a worship service, presented him with a special envelope with \$2.00 and asked if it would help the museum to open up. Wesley told him, “young man it most certainly will help it to open up!”<sup>52</sup> A member over eighty years of age gave to the project because she said it was as momentous to her as seeing Barak Obama being elected President. The project provided opportunities for individual gifts as well:

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<sup>50</sup> Peggy McGlone, “How the African American museum is raising the bar for black philanthropy,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/african-american-museums-fundraising-touches-deep-history-among-donors/2016/05/23/bc2cbc94-1613-11e6-924d-838753295f9a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e6dd1fbb6df6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/african-american-museums-fundraising-touches-deep-history-among-donors/2016/05/23/bc2cbc94-1613-11e6-924d-838753295f9a_story.html?utm_term=.e6dd1fbb6df6) (accessed February 12, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Howard-John Wesley, “The Story Behind Alfred Street’s Million Dollar Donation to the NMAAHC,” interviewed by *CBS This Morning*, CBS News Video, (aired September 24, 2016) <http://www.alfredstreet.org/news-video/the-story-behind-alfred-streets-million-dollar-donation-to-the-nmaaahc/>.

Earl W. Stafford and his wife, Amanda, who are members of the Alfred Street Baptist Church, also donated \$2 million on their own. “I want this for my children and grandchildren . . . for generations unborn who will better understand how we fit into this great American fabric,” said Earl Stafford, a Northern Virginia philanthropist and entrepreneur. “This is going to have far-reaching importance not only in the African American community, but in all of America.”<sup>53</sup>

ASBC was the only faith-based organization to contribute to the museum at this level of giving.

The museum donation event was a unique evangelical activity. It cannot be considered as simply a social ministry activity because it does not fit the traditional models of social action, social justice, the relief for the poor, community education support, or political protest. This event cannot be classified with feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, or providing medical supplies in support of local and foreign missions. The evangelistic strength of this event was seen in two distinctive ways. First, ASBC was able to project its outreach ministry activities, as a faith-based organization, onto the national stage through a national museum. As a founding donor, ASBC secured a permanent record of its support for the preservation of African American history and culture. ASBC joins the national historical status of churches like the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Atlanta, GA, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church of Birmingham, AL, and the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church of Montgomery, AL. These churches were known and celebrated because of their activism during the Civil Rights Movement. ASBC’s activism was not social but philanthropic in nature. They were able to use philanthropy as a tool for evangelical exposure to a national and international audience. For example, visitors to the museum might be inclined to also visit ASBC following their visit before they leave town.

Second, members within ASBC were mobilized to see giving to the museum as a form of outreach in the same ways they saw giving to the local or foreign missions work of the church. The expected results from their gifts would have the same effect of “evangelizing” or inviting people to come to the church like as through other mission activities. The members were able to

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<sup>53</sup> McGlone, *African American Museum*.

celebrate and publish this event when witnessing to people about the ministries the church was committed to and the influence their church had on a local and national level. Persons outside of ASBC, after reading about ASBC's donation to the museum, have commented on blogs about their interest in being affiliated with a church that is doing these types of projects.<sup>54</sup>

The third event that embodies evangelical spirituality involves the "100K" Project in celebration of Howard-John Wesley's 10<sup>th</sup> Pastoral Anniversary. The "100K" Project's goal is to serve 100,000 persons within a year's timeframe from September 2017 until September 2018. This project is managed and guided by the Missions and Outreach Ministry. Under this ministry category, there is an Evangelism Ministry "designed to prepare the church community to be effective witnesses of the gospel of salvation of Jesus Christ. The goal is to create a culture within the membership that makes evangelism a Spirit-led way of life by providing church groups and members with a series of interactive evangelism training opportunities."<sup>55</sup>

The Missions and Evangelism Ministries work in coordination with one another to: "answer God's call to reach and touch the lives of people who may not know that God loves them and that He has a plan for them. The commission proclaims the gospel and salvation of Jesus Christ—both within and outside the church—so that those who are lost will be found and those who are saved will be convicted and transformed to do greater works."<sup>56</sup> The focus of evangelism is for the individual to receive salvation from Jesus Christ and to live in relationship with fellow brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Furthermore, each month during the project year will have a specific focus (homeless, hunger, veterans, etc.) and ministry group (seniors, men, women, children and youth, etc.)

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<sup>54</sup> McGlone, *African American Museum*.

<sup>55</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, "ASBC Missions and Outreach Ministry," <http://www.alfredstreet.org/ministries/outreach-and-missions/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, "Evangelism Ministry," <http://www.alfredstreet.org/developing-as-a-disciple/evangelism-ministry-2/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

assisting with the service activities. ASBC uses social media heavily and will track the service events leading to 100K contacts through its website under the hashtag #100Kserved.<sup>57</sup>

The “100K” Project is a creative means of encouraging the ASBC members to participate in evangelical outreach. The members are invited to find their own way of serving others in the community and to post their experiences. The hermeneutical basis for the project is John 13, where Jesus washes the disciple’s feet and Mark 9:35, in which Jesus commands that the first shall be last and the last shall be first; the servant shall be the greatest of all. The project makes every member of the church accountable for participating in the work of evangelism instead of keeping the missions work within a group of a few people.

The African American Baptist Evangelical spirituality type is demonstrated by ministries that emphasize activities through which church members make personal contact with people outside of the church with the goal offering them the message of Jesus Christ, in order for a life-changing conversion experience to occur. The ASBC has established a 100,000 person goal for their evangelism target, in hope that a significant number of contacted persons will accept salvation and become members of their congregation. A year-long evangelism project is not unusual for ASBC. While celebrating their bicentennial in 2003, ASBC conducted a major community outreach project call “We are our Brother’s Keeper.”<sup>58</sup>

### **3.2.2. Clifford A. Jones and Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC**

Dr. Clifford A. Jones has served as the Senior Pastor of the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church of Charlotte, NC since October 1982. In addition to his leadership of the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (FMBC), Jones has held some very significant and influential

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<sup>57</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, “100K Served,” <http://hfw10.org/100k/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Alfred Street Baptist Church, “History,” <http://www.alfredstreet.org/our-church/church-history/> (accessed February 12, 2018).

leadership roles among Baptist and foreign missions organizations. A few of his leadership positions include serving as Chairman of the Governance Committee, National Baptist Convention of USA, Inc.; Host Chairperson of the 133rd Annual Session of National Baptist Convention of USA, Inc.; Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance; Host Chairman of the National Baptist Congress of Christian Education's 96th Annual Session; President of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention; President of the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.; and Moderator of the Mecklenburg General Baptist Association.<sup>59</sup>

Jones' leadership and participation in many of these organizations provide insight concerning his commitment to evangelism and missions related activities. His leadership of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention reflects the priority and high value evangelism and missions has in his ministry. The Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention (LCFMC) was named after Reverend Lott Carey (1780-1829) due to the tremendous impact Carey had upon the early stages of Christian Missions development during the ante-bellum period of American history. Carey is described as the "American pioneer" for the missionary movement of "evangelization of Africa and other parts of the underdeveloped world."<sup>60</sup> This missionary movement allowed African Americans to respond to the Great Commission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with other missionary groups and societies. Missionary service to Africa had a unique appeal to mission-minded African Americans; "Africa was never really a foreign field for blacks in the same sense that it was for other American missionaries. For them, the evangelization of Africans held a strange or special spiritual and emotional appeal to their Christian consciousness. It lured them as the 'Lost Canaan Land'."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, "Our Pastor," <http://www.friendshipcharlotte.org/pastor-jones/> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> Leroy Fitts, *The Lott Carey Legacy of African American Missions* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1994), x.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



During the ante-bellum period, there were real tensions that existed in the African American community as Black Churches and Black Christians sought a unique identity as missionaries and not “colonizers” in foreign lands. They recognized the need for the formation of national Black Baptist organizations intent on addressing the call from missionaries in Africa for mission support. During this historical period, there were social and political tensions where Black and White Baptist missions organizations attempted to serve together. For example, Carey saw the need to partner with the American Colonization Society (ACS) in order to establish the mission in Liberia but fully recognized that his missionary work had different objectives than those of the ACS.<sup>62</sup> The primary objectives of the ACS included the relocation of freed American slaves to the African continent. Carey’s partnership with the ACS caused many Black Churches to withhold missionary support to Carey due to the ACS’s racial policies of re-colonization of African Americans to Africa. There were some Black clergymen who supported voluntary emigration to Africa, but viewed the ACS as “a hypocritical organization bent on pressuring Congress into deporting all free blacks in order to insure the permanent security of slavery.”<sup>63</sup> Carey’s objective for missions was for the purpose of evangelism and not to fulfill any social or political objectives concerning racial relocation of freed slaves.

Carey reinterpreted the “dark continent” perception of Africa as darkness yearning for exposure to the Gospel, not the complexion of the skin of the inhabitants.<sup>64</sup> Carey believed that “Africa suffers for gospel truth.” Carey’s missionary focus was to establish missions deeper into the interior of the African continent. Earlier missions established by European and American missionaries were established and remained along the West African coastline. Carey recognized and appreciated the significance of Africa in the early years of Christianity. Early church

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<sup>62</sup> Fitts, *Lott Carey Legacy*, 21-22.

<sup>63</sup> Raboteau, *The Black Experience*, 99.

<sup>64</sup> Fitts, *Lott Carey Legacy*, 57.

historical records reveal that “Africa became the homeland of the most important missionary and educational activity of the early Christian Church.”<sup>65</sup> As Christianity spread southward from Jerusalem, North Africa became a place filled with theological inquiry and debate. Africa was the homeland of most of the great Church Fathers.<sup>66</sup> For Carey, it was important to maintain and strengthen the link Africa had with Christianity and the link African Americans had, even though displaced, with Africa.

Lott Carey’s biography traces his roots from slavery to freedom, from poverty to prosperity, and from illiteracy to becoming a theological pioneer concerning Black missiology. His story highlights the influences of family and church experiences that guided Carey to forsake all and go to the mission field. Carey’s experiences in Liberia are also documented and show his commitment to the mission in spite of the difficulties he encountered. Carey was willing to endure hardships, served as physician, soldier, diplomat as well as pastor and missionary. He ultimately gave his life for the protection and success of the mission in Liberia. It was Carey’s untimely death that leads to the founding of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention in 1897. Carey’s life and mission work had great impacted on African American Baptists and challenged them with the questions concerning how best to execute a national strategy for Foreign Missions.

The history and current evangelical/missions work of the LCFMC is essential in relating the evangelical aspects of spiritual formation of Jones’ evangelical work on the international, national and local levels. The evangelism Jones espoused on the international level is seen in operation in his local church. The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church Mission Statement:

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>66</sup> Fitts, *Lott Carey Legacy*, xi.

We are the people of God, called together to be the body of Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim God's will, to love one another, to be instruments of salvation – preaching, teaching, worshiping, caring, sharing, growing and giving service through community outreach<sup>67</sup>

is demonstrated in the ways they execute missions. FMBC believes their global influence must be far more significant than just visiting a faraway land but their presence and emphasis is reflected in love, financial support, evangelism, free medical care, and endearing fellowship.<sup>68</sup> Evangelism or “becoming instruments of salvation” is a critical component of their spiritual identity as an African American congregation.

The Global Missions of FMBC includes the financial support of a fulltime missionary in Ghana, Africa. Missionary Rovaughna Richardson is a member of FMBC who has been appointed as an American Baptist International Ministries (IM) Missionary. She is serving at the Baptist Vocational Training Center in partnership with the Ghana Baptist Convention.<sup>69</sup> Richardson is a trained social worker who provides counseling for young women who have been rescued, released or escaped from a life of forced labor, sexual and physical abuse and social isolation. These girls, usually between the age of 5 and 12, are given to the gods as pardon for an offense committed by another family member and serve as a slave to the shrine priest for the rest of their life. The practice, called *Trokosi*, was made illegal in Ghana in 1998 but government enforcement has been limited.<sup>70</sup> Richardson functions in an evangelical role, which is connected to the Global Missions, and is financially underwritten by the FMBC.

In addition to nurturing the development of missionaries, the Global Missions of FMBC also includes: the Children's Rights Ministry of Durban, South Africa; the Global Medical Outreach of South Africa; the Grace Community Church and the Madidi Baptist Church of

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<sup>67</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, “Global Missions,” <http://www.friendshipcharlotte.org/get-connected/global-missions/> (accessed February 14, 2018).

<sup>68</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, *Global Missions*.

<sup>69</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, “Ghana Missionary,” [http://www.friendshipcharlotte.org/ministry\\_post/ghana-missionary/](http://www.friendshipcharlotte.org/ministry_post/ghana-missionary/) (accessed February 20, 2018).

<sup>70</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, *Ghana Missionary*.

Soshanguve, Pretoria, RSA; mission work in Guyana, South America, Haiti, and Jamaica; the Thato Community of Excellence Mabopane, South Africa. These missions involve ministering to and advocating for orphaned children whose parents died from HIV/AIDS; and providing optometry, dentistry, and medical services in two villages, Hebron and Ischung, near Pretoria, South Africa.

Jones led FMBC in responding to the earthquake damage in Haiti in 2010. FMBC supported funding to build 1,880 temporary shelters and 581 latrines in Cabaret, Haiti. They continued their mission work and presence through 2012 with the completion 150 home developments in Leogane, Haiti.<sup>71</sup> FMBC is involved with well-drilling operations for rural communities in South Africa who are suffering from severe drought conditions. Another aspect of Jones' embodiment of evangelical spirituality is seen in the partnership he developed between Tshwane North District Schools in Soshanguve, outside of Pretoria, and Friendship with the purpose to more effectively reach more students through the donation of 50,000 books for learners in grades 8 thru 12.<sup>72</sup> They are also partnering with Baptist Convention College in Soweto, South Africa to include Bibles and theological materials for the seminarian students. These partnerships increase FMBC's evangelical connection with communities on foreign lands with the message of Jesus Christ with the purpose of adding souls to the Kingdom of Christ.

Jones has engaged evangelism with a bi-directional perspective. He has not only addressed social, political, and economic issues affecting people in foreign locations by encouraging FMBC "to be present on the ground" with people in places of distress, he has developed ministry which provides cultural exchange for elementary school children. The International Children Outreach Ministry (I.C.O.M.) in Mabapone, South Africa, founded in

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<sup>71</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, "Global Missions," <http://www.friendshipcharlotte.org/get-connected/global-missions/> (accessed February 14, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> Friendship Baptist Church, *Global Missions*.

1999, “organizes opportunities to bring at-risk children to live with Christian host families in the United States on a short-term basis. The “at-risk” child is defined as any child that is suffering from environmental, health, economic, violence (including, but not limited to war), educational or any other risk factors.”<sup>73</sup> The ministry emphasizes the evangelistic opportunities created between the children and host families for the children to “grow spiritually, educationally, and culturally.”

Jones’ hermeneutical lens for global missions is “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ And I said ‘Here am I; send me’” (Isaiah 6:8). For Jones, evangelical spirituality is manifested by people leaving their present location and journeying to the location where people in need of the message of Christ and remaining present with them. It is an incomplete and insufficient process for missions to only involve sending financial resources. Evangelical spirituality must include the formation of new and enduring relationships between people. FMBC trains teams of volunteers/missionaries from within their congregation to serve in the various global missions environments.

In ways that are very similar to Lott Carey, Jones demonstrated the continual need for African American Baptists to be involved with evangelical activities on the African continent and in places throughout the world. It is easy to understand his commitment to missions in Africa while he was leading the LCFMC, but his evangelical commitment continued and expanded in his local congregation well after his tenure as president of LCFMC ended. His evangelical spirituality is expressed in his interpretation of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) to go out into the world and make disciples. Jones’ understanding of discipleship is echoed in the FMBC Mission Statement, which connects biblical Scripture with deliberate service to humankind.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

### **3.3. Contemplative Spirituality**

Over the past century, African Americans have made great strides in the pursuit of educational opportunities. At the turn of the twentieth century, among Black churches, organizations, and institutions, there was a primary drive to provide racial uplift of the African American community through education. In this thesis, from a historical perspective, African American Baptist contemplative spirituality has been demonstrated by highlighting the examples of Howard Thurman and Samuel DeWitt Proctor. Thurman and Proctor were cited because of their dual affiliation with both the church and the academy. Thurman served as pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church of Oberlin, OH and then went on to serve as the Dean of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel at Howard University in Washington, DC from 1932 until 1944. While at Howard University, Thurman was intent on changing the order of the worship services in order to create an environment with an enhanced spiritual tone with meditation, quiet space, and prayer. The “Twilight Hours” vesper services gave Thurman opportunity to experiment with implementing his quest for the nurture of the inner life of the soul within a worship service structure.<sup>74</sup> In July 1944, Thurman left Howard University and helped to establish, with Dr. Alfred G. Fisk, the interracial, intercultural, and interdenominational Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (CFAP) in San Francisco, CA. At CFAP, Thurman was able, through his sermons and teachings, to interpret the deeper meaning of religious experience and provide “thoughtful content for reflection.”<sup>75</sup>

In 1953, Thurman was invited to serve as the Dean of the Marsh Chapel and Professor of Spiritual Disciplines and Resources at Boston University in Boston, MA. Thurman viewed this as an opportunity “to see whether there could be established in a large urban university a center

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<sup>74</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream: The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

of worship in which the experience of Fellowship Church could be shared in the restricted environment of an academic community.”<sup>76</sup> It was a difficult decision for Thurman to leave CFAP for Boston. He negotiated a relationship with the church, as “Minister-at-Large”, which allowed him to remain in active membership of the church, but freed him from the day-to-day problems and decisions. He developed an understanding between the church and the administration of Boston University allowing him the freedom to preach at the church during the summers at the wishes of the church and that he would continue to represent the interests of the church by remaining in connection with its members as a pastoral leader, as his schedule permitted.<sup>77</sup>

Proctor followed a similar path as Thurman. Proctor started his ministry by serving as Pastor of the Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, RI. In 1949, Proctor left Pond Street Church to accept a teaching position at Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA. He was dedicated to cultivating and refining the tools of the mind. He wanted to see “black people acquire the intellectual, economic, and political clout to improve their condition.” The classroom and the pulpit were his obsessions.<sup>78</sup> He was always on the lookout for students he could mentor in the service of the church and the academy. Proctor served as president of Virginia Union University and the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, NC. He ultimately found his way back to the church and became the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, NY in 1972. While serving at Abyssinian, Proctor also served as the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Professor at Rutgers University in Camden, NJ. Proctor accepted the pastorate with the condition that he was allowed to teach at Rutgers.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 131.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>78</sup> Proctor, *Substance of Things*, 64.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

Proctor was able to mentor and facilitate the graduation of many Black students with earned doctoral degrees at Rutgers but he also found a student minister to mentor at Abyssinian, the Reverend Calvin O. Butts III. Proctor's focus at Abyssinian was to continue the social gospel dimensions of their ministry but to also give greater emphasis on the worship of God, which would "center believers and return their focus to an omnipotent and merciful God, the Spirit of the Living God."<sup>80</sup> Proctor would nurture this same focus in his protégé Rev Butts.

Contemplative spirituality is embodied in the post-modern era by African American clergy who seek to maintain a strong connection between the church and the academy, who desire to lead the church into a deeper understanding of religious writings and to nurture the spiritual life of people through meditation, reflection, and prayer. The religious and educational landscape changed significantly from the early twentieth century into the beginning of the twenty-first. At the dawn of the twentieth century the vast majority of African Americans was uneducated and had few options for higher education. Black student enrollment in Black and White colleges and universities rose after the 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which declared that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal, however the larger number of Black students attended traditionally Black or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).<sup>81</sup> The increased access to high education has been beneficial to clergy and church members alike.

### **3.3.1. Calvin O. Butts III and Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem, NY**

Dr. Calvin Otis Butts III followed in the footsteps of his mentor, Dr. Samuel Proctor, as pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. Prior to becoming pastor in 1989, he had served as an

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<sup>80</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 251-252.

<sup>81</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "The Traditionally Black Institutions of Higher Education 1860 to 1982," Prepared by Susan T. Hill Washington, DC, 1985, xiii.



assistant, associate, and executive minister over a seventeen year period.<sup>82</sup> He first came to Abyssinian while a seminary student at Union Theological Seminary, when Proctor was just beginning his pastorate. During Butts' first decade of leadership, he placed emphasis on the members renewing their commitments to stewardship of time, talent, treasure, and their lives in study and prayer.<sup>83</sup> His initial emphasis on these values were consistent with the way Proctor established his pastorate, which was to emphasize spiritual preparation before and beside the engagement in social ministry. Butts believed that Abyssinian found its nucleus in its worship experience and "building upon that focus went forth into the community to serve."<sup>84</sup>

Butts offered Abyssinian sermons filled with a hermeneutical insight on the Scriptures that welcomed the listeners to embark on a spiritual journey with him. His sermons were also filled with a wealth of information about African culture, political issues, health crises, relationship issues, racial issues, and many more issues that impacted the Harlem community.<sup>85</sup> Butts' administration placed emphasis on providing more opportunities for spiritual growth, spiritual retreats, Christian education, and prayer meeting participation. Butts developed the Abyssinian Institute for Christian Education with the aim "to undergird the walk of faith with the quest for understanding" and to "engage more seriously the crucial link between social action and consciousness raising through a well-organized curriculum of study for Christians facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."<sup>86</sup> He desired to minister to both soul and mind.

Butts had experienced a decade of successful ministry at Abyssinian and in the Harlem community when he received a new and challenging calling. In 1999 Butts was asked to consider becoming the president of the College at Old Westbury in the State University of New York

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<sup>82</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 290.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 297.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

(SUNY) system. The College at Old Westbury was founded in 1965 with a special mission to provide “higher educational opportunities for students from working-class families and less-affluent ethnic or racial minorities.”<sup>87</sup> The college is among the youngest schools in the sixty-four school SUNY system and has great pride in the “diversity and accomplishments of its faculty, staff, and student body, as well as its longstanding commitment to academic innovation, access, and social justice.”<sup>88</sup> Butts would follow a long line of innovative presidents of the college, including Harris Wofford, who had a background in “politics and in organizing the Peace Corps; John D. Maguire, an innovative administrator and civil rights activist; and Clyde Wingfield, who had previously headed New York City University’s business-oriented Baruch College.”<sup>89</sup> Butts decided to accept the offer and in September 1999 he became the fifth president of the college.

His acceptance of the president position was not initially received well by his congregation. There were questions concerning how he would be able to manage both roles effectively. Butts addressed their concerns by declaring that “there are no more important things than education and faith.”<sup>90</sup> He also referenced both of the previous pastors, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Samuel Proctor, who served dual roles in politics and education while serving the Abyssinian Church. Butts did not consider resigning the pastorate but served in the same manner that Samuel Proctor had. Butts embodied African American Baptist contemplative spirituality by maintaining both the spiritual needs of the church while serving in the academy. His role as an educational leader allowed him to develop mentoring relationships to help African Americans

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>88</sup> College at Old Westbury, “Campus History,” <https://www.oldwestbury.edu/about/history> (accessed February 22, 2018).

<sup>89</sup> College at Old Westbury, *Campus History*.

<sup>90</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 336.

and other minorities to fulfill their goals of receiving a college degree. His roles in the church and academy were complementary with each other.

At the start of his second decade of pastoral leadership, Butts remained focused on his goal of leading Abyssinian into deeper levels of spiritual growth and transformation. Within his six-year strategic plan for growth, he articulated his spiritual vision for the church as:

“strengthening the church spiritually, mentally, and physically, with the particular emphasis on nurturing a new generation... to inform, prepare, and arm our youth with the knowledge of how to use essential spiritual tools.”<sup>91</sup> One of the many ways Butts reinforces contemplative

spirituality is by the use of recited texts and music during worship services and special events.

For example, on every December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year, Abyssinian members gather together for a

“watch night” service that has followed the same format for decades. The service begins with the congregation standing together with the Mass Choir and singing, without hymnals:

We’ve come this far by faith,  
Leaning on the Lord.  
Trusting in His holy Word,  
He never failed me yet.

Oh, Oh-Oh-Oh, Oh-Oh-Oh  
Can’t turn around.  
We’ve come this far by faith.<sup>92</sup>

The spiritual importance of this service is that it connects the Abyssinians with enslaved ancestors, who gathered to celebrate their freedom at midnight, January 1, 1863.<sup>93</sup> But it also renews their spiritual connection with the God who continues to guide their spiritual journey today.<sup>94</sup> Each week during worship members could be heard singing their petitions to God:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>92</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 339-340.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>94</sup> For decades African American churches continued to celebrate what they termed *Jubilee*, a biblical term for a holy day celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation. Sandy Dwayne Martin, “Vindicated Faith, Not a Lost Cause: African American Baptist Identity and Vision in the Civil War and Postwar Eras, 1850-1900.” chap. 1 in *Between*

“Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me” or their formal prayer by singing the Lord’s Prayer in unison.<sup>95</sup> The repetition of these prayers and themes encouraged deep reflection on the nature and effect prayer has in the spiritual life of the individual.

Butts continued to build upon the foundations of musical excellence established by Proctor as a means to strengthen the spiritual life of the church. Proctor once noted, “There is no way to record how a solo strengthened the heart of a worshipper or a hymn comforted a grief stricken soul.”<sup>96</sup> Abyssinian sought and hired professionally trained ministers of music, composers, musicians, and paid singers and soloists, in addition to the volunteer singers. They used the talents of gifted students studying at the Manhattan School of Music.<sup>97</sup> Abyssinian is driven to achieve excellence in the worship and musical arts. Butts placed a high value in the role sacred music plays in contemplation, reflection, and personal devotion. Abyssinians recognized excellent music played a key role in cleansing the spirit, driving out ugly thoughts, and putting wings to their prayers.<sup>98</sup>

The recited texts and themes used often by Butts includes a call for the church to always focus on the wellbeing and development of the whole person – spirit, mind, body. There is an immediate recognition within the words of the theme that “spirit” comes before “mind”, and “mind” before “body.” This acknowledges the importance of spiritual development in relation to the development of mind and body. This in no way diminishes the value of mental and physical development, but places a priority on the spiritual growth and development of the congregation. African American Baptist contemplative spirituality embodies the use of recited text, themes,

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*Fetters and Freedom: African American Baptists since Emancipation*, ed. Edward R. Crowther and Keith Harper (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2015), 18.

<sup>95</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 252.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>97</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 254.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

and stages of faith or the use of rites of passage as an important means of cultivating the inner spiritual life. Butts saw Abyssinian as strongest in its social ministry only when it was strongest in its spiritual life, which derives from a soul that is prayerful, reflective, and meditative.

Butts had an interest in developing new ways to nurture the spiritual growth of African American males from the ages of 12 to 16 years old. He commissioned the Board of Christian Social Concern (BCSC) at Abyssinian to offer proposals to address his desire for Abyssinian to create a new paradigm for the nation. The BCSC researched different rites of passage programs in Louisville, KY, Detroit, MI, and Chicago, IL. They recommended to Pastor Butts an Afro-centric manhood training program for adolescent boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen called the Blue Nile Rites of Passage. The name of the program was given by “Egyptologist Dr. Yosef Ben-Jochannan, affectively known in the Harlem community as ‘Dr. Ben’.”<sup>99</sup> For the BCSC, the afro-centric character of the program was an essential feature:

[The Abyssinian founders] designed and tailored it to address important aspects of [urban African American] culture, emphasizing African heritage and African-American history. Its creed, principles, process, and curriculum were built upon other Afro-centric models and maintained the traditional phases of separation, transition, and reincorporation.<sup>100</sup>

The Blue Nile Rites of Passage program was activated in February 1994 and included seven topics or principles: personal growth and development, health and wellness, spiritual grounding, community consciousness, the historical Black experience, economic awareness, and politics.<sup>101</sup> The program included dedicated volunteer mentors, known as elders, who were committed to assisting and nurturing their young mentees in whatever ways they needed. The pilot program included twenty young boys and within its first year, in June, twelve young men were honored in

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<sup>99</sup> McNeil, et al., *Witness*, 324.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

a “Passing Through” ceremony.<sup>102</sup> In October 1994, the program was expanded to cover a nine-month period and initiated thirty-five new participants, with a group of over twenty-five “elders” prepared to guide them.<sup>103</sup> The program was deemed an overwhelming success and in January 1995, a similar program for girls, Daughters of the Blue Nile, was also created.

Through the Blue Nile Rites of Passage program, Butts was able to make spiritual formation and education essential components for the nurture of their youth. The program is not limited to the membership of Abyssinian and is open to youth throughout the community; however, the program is executed because of its spiritual formative value, not its social ministry impact. The elders are responsible for imparting the principles to the youth and to create spiritual, mental, and physical space for growth to occur. African American Baptist contemplative spirituality is demonstrated in programs like this by encouraging young people to think deeply about their spiritual lives in terms of a Rite of Passage. The Rite of Passage is about a journey and spiritual formation is also a journey one takes over their lifetime.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 327.

## 4. Discussion, Discernment, and Program Deployment

So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

In Chapter 3, African American Baptist spirituality was shown to operate in the modern era in similar ways as in history. The pastoral leaders, churches, and organizations demonstrated a strong connection with the social reformers, the prophetic and protester, the evangelist, the sage, and the mystic. The leaders were able to gauge the pulse of their times, their communities, and the world and formulate not only what African American Baptist spirituality looks like but also what it does and how it sounds in a world desperate for what it has to offer. Chapter 3 presented a brief glimpse into innovative church responses to a new generation of youth and young adults seeking spiritual guidance and pastoral care. The use of social media as a tool for evangelism will increase in years to come in African American Baptist churches.

In Chapter 4, the spiritual formation types will be evaluated based on their strengths and weaknesses. There are strengths and weaknesses that are common to all. The assumption that this thesis makes is that if a particular spiritual formation type is predominate and in operation in the church, then there are particular leadership requirements and/or considerations that must be recognized. There are leadership requirements that are common among all types, but there are additional leadership characteristics which may be more valuable in one type and not as valuable in another. Chapter 4 will also place the spiritual formation types in conversation with the biblical leadership motifs of prophet, priest, and king. In Reformed theology, the *munus triplex* describes the three-fold offices that Jesus Christ fulfills in Christian Scripture. In a broader sense, the thesis looks at how the leadership roles compare to the spiritual formation types based on the primary objectives of the types and the pastoral leaders associated with those types. And last,

there is a conclusion with recommendations for spiritual growth across all spiritual formation types for African American Baptist churches, organizations, and individuals.

#### ***4.1. Spiritual Formation Types Strengths and Weaknesses***

In the description of the African American Baptist spiritual formation types, the first thing that is certain about the types is that they all share some of the same strengths and weaknesses between them and there are strengths and weaknesses that are unique to each type. Each type has a different set of objectives and counted events, activities, community service programs, etc. using different metrics. If one could study an annual report of ministry for churches in each of the formation types, one would see that within each type, each church counts different events that signify success in their ministry. It matters what they count because the count reflects progress in fulfilling the church's mission and calling. For example, a church in the social formation type would count the number of meals served at the homeless shelter, the number of social action or political rallies organized or attended, or the number of apartments provided for seniors. A church in the evangelical formation type would count the number of confessions of faith made by new converts, the number of baptisms, revivals, mission trips, and new churches established. The church in the contemplative formation type would count persons in attendance at Sunday School, worship services, spiritual retreats, prayer meeting, and mentoring programs. Each spiritual formation type gives insight on what the church values most as a part of its Christian identity. The church is fulfilling what it interprets as the call of God but in distinct ways according to the characteristics of a particular spiritual formation type.

There are at least a couple of obvious overall strengths each spiritual formation type share. First, each type has a strong set of scriptural references in support of the ministries and activities associated with the type. Each type uses biblical references as the basis for the ministry



or service they create to meet their social, evangelical, or contemplative ends. Whether it's the use of Matthew 25:35-40, Luke 4:18, or Ephesians 2:19-22 for the social type;<sup>104</sup> or Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 28:18-20, or John 13:20 for the evangelical type;<sup>105</sup> or Romans 12:1-3, Philippians 4:6-9, or 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24 for the contemplative type,<sup>106</sup> the leaders among these types apply a hermeneutical approach to the biblical texts which undergirds the objectives of the ministry and needs of the community. Each pastoral leader, in this thesis, offered solid biblical foundation for the activities supporting their spirituality orientation, for their churches, by either quoting a foundational scriptural reference within the overall Mission Statement of the Church or a guiding Scripture for the specific ministry activity.

Second, each spiritual formation type functions in conjunction with the other types and not in opposition. The spiritual formation types share the same core African American Baptist Church Covenant themes of "being led by the Spirit to walk together in Christian love:"

to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout out the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.<sup>107</sup>

Most of the churches referenced in this thesis have adopted this or a similar church covenant document to guide the church's pathway among the themes shared by the majority of African American Baptists. Each of the spiritual formation types affirms the majority of these core

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<sup>104</sup> The key words and/or themes among these scriptural references include: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners, healing the broken-hearted, release captives, "set at liberty the oppressed," and "all are fellow citizens in God's household."

<sup>105</sup> The recurring themes among the evangelical scriptural texts involve a specific calling to serve God and our neighbor (call narratives). Their themes use language like: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us," "go and teach all nations, baptizing, etc.," and "any who receives you receives me."

<sup>106</sup> The contemplative spiritual formation type used scriptural references which included terms like: "transformed by the renewing of your mind," thinking soberly, "if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things," think about these things, and sanctify spirit, soul, and body blameless to Christ.

<sup>107</sup> Turner, *Discipleship for African American Christians*, Kindle Locations 22-25.

beliefs and those articulated in the Baptist Articles of Faith.<sup>108</sup> Because of the autonomous character of Baptists, each congregation decides on its own how it receives, implements, or promulgates the Articles of Faith.

A few weaknesses each of the spiritual formation types share is that these descriptions are only an attempt to develop a topology in order to understand the spiritual characteristics of the pastoral leadership and congregational objectives. The weaknesses of any topology would include the spiritual characteristics that exist in the leadership or ministries that were missed, overlooked, or undervalued by an observer from the outside looking in. The outside observer would not have all of the details of the leadership planning meetings, congregational meetings and debates, or possess an understanding of the community dynamics which prompt the pastor and church to respond to the community in the ways that they do. A congregational study would have to be conducted and a survey would need to be developed to assess the needs of the community. This thesis does not offer this type of congregational study analysis and therefore a weakness of the spiritual formation types lies in how broad and/or narrow the definition of the type is constructed for the pastoral leaders and churches included within the thesis.

Using the social, evangelical, and contemplative spiritual formation typology, an African American Baptist church rarely operates with more than one spiritual formation type as the dominate characteristic at a time. The dominate spiritual formation type may change between types over time, but usually, only one will more accurately describe the characteristics of their spiritual focus at that time. An example cited in this thesis of a church that moved between different formation types was the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, NY. Early in the

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<sup>108</sup> A sample of the Articles of Faith includes doctrinal statements concerning the Scriptures, the True God, the Fall of Man, the Way of Salvation, etc. The National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. "What We Believe," <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/about-us/what-we-believe.html> (accessed February 27, 2018). The Articles of Faith used by the NBC are based on the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833). William Latane Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago: Judson Press, 1959).

twentieth century, Abyssinian was heavily involved with the Social Gospel Movement as a means to meeting the needs of Blacks migrating from the South and therefore the church reflected a social spiritual formation type. Under the leadership of Pastors Adam Clayton Powell Sr. and Jr., Abyssinian embodied this spiritual formation type from 1908 until 1972. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. was very involved with politics and social justice issues and led the church to participate in those ways. However, from 1972 to the present, under the pastoral leadership of Samuel D. Proctor and Calvin O. Butts III, the church demonstrated the characteristics of the contemplative spiritual formation type due to Proctor and Butt's focus on education, prayer, and spiritual development for the congregation. Abyssinian was still involved with providing social programs and ministry in the community but under Proctor and Butts the emphasis was on enhancing their spiritual lives in order to serve the community better.

It is difficult for a single church to be "all things to all people at all times," even though they may have a full menu of ministries, programs, Christian education, missions, music, worship arts, and community service projects. A predominate spiritual formation type will be favored and serve as an identity marker by pastoral leadership or the laity. Population changes in a community due to socio-economic, political, racial, and educational factors will influence the type of response an African American Baptist church will provide to address the needs it identifies as "Spirit led" and most appropriate. There are a host of community issues like health care, employment, housing, gentrification, economic development, youth and senior social services which the church is trying to remedy. The spiritual formation type descriptions attempt to narrow the church's focus in some specific areas of concern.

#### **4.1.1. Social Spiritual Formation Type**

The churches that are identified within the social spiritual formation type display several strengths. First, the churches are able to develop highly visible community ministries, which produce immediate and tangible results. The activities of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing shelter for the homeless, or jobs for the unemployed are actions that touch the community and people's lives directly. The social ministries of the church allow many of its members to participate, serve, and to engage others through personal contact. By serving the needs of their community, the members are also serving God. When the church is making personal contact with the people of the community, it is creating an opportunity for church growth by demonstrating its concern for the wellbeing of the people in its environment. A person's initial contact with the church may come through a social ministry activity, but relationships may be created between them and the members of the church which lead them to become church members in the future. An additional strength of a church associated with the social type is their opportunity to create social change and advocacy through their social ministries. They are able to identify the social, political, and economic issues affecting their communities at the grass root level and advocate for social change. The church has the opportunity to become a voice for those who may be voiceless and raise the social concerns of the community to those in power and demand civic, economic, or political action.

For the social type there are some issues that can be viewed as both strengths and weaknesses simultaneously. For example, churches may have to form new partnerships and alliances in order to provide some services to the community. The new partnerships could present challenges to whether the association with other social or political entities impacts the church's Christian identity in ways that cause the members to become divided over the issues of

race, politics, or methods of protest. Examples of these issues can be seen in the ministries of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and J. Alfred Smith, Sr.

Adam Clayton Powell Jr. was a Black Baptist Minister serving the Abyssinian Baptist Church during the Great Depression. He wanted to help the unemployed in Harlem, so he organized the Coordinating Committee for Employment in 1937. Initially, this committee, which is more precisely viewed as a mass organization, was formed from individuals who participated in the mass demonstrations that Powell had led over the past seven years in Harlem and throughout New York City. With its formal organization in 1937, Powell saw the need to expand the committee to include other community groups. He invited and developed relationships with the Marcus Garvey Black Nationalists, wealthy Northern and Southern socialites, the West Indians, and a former U.S. Vice Presidential candidate of the Communist Party.<sup>109</sup> In the political arena, Powell was a Democrat but functioned in the U.S. Congress as an Independent, even campaigning against his own political party candidate, Adlai Stevenson, by supporting Republican Presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956.<sup>110</sup> Powell paid a high price for his actions. He lost his chairmanship of the Education and Labor Committee in Congress and had few allies among Democrats or Republicans. During his years in Congress, Powell maintained his support among his constituents in Harlem, his Abyssinian Church family, and African Americans around the country.

J. Alfred Smith conducted ministry in Oakland, CA in the early 1970s with the Black Panther Party as his next door neighbors. Smith saw common ground in working with the Black Panthers because of their shared concerns for the progression and safety of the African American community. Smith's church, Allen Temple, did not see their partnership with the Black Panthers

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<sup>109</sup> A. Clayton Powell, Jr. *Adam by Adam: The Autobiography of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971), 62-63.

<sup>110</sup> Peter J. Paris, *Black Religious Leaders: Conflict in Unity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 171.

as antithetical to their Christian faith or witness. Smith recognized that some partnerships were necessary to meet the needs of the community; however, some partnership did not have to last indefinitely. New alliances were required and existing ones were dissolved as conditions and circumstances changed over time. Due to the changing racial diversity of his community, Smith reached out to Hispanic leaders and organizations in order to meet the needs of every racial group in his area. He led his church to build bridges of cooperation wherever they could be found for the betterment of the church and society.

#### **4.1.2. Evangelical Spiritual Formation Type**

The strength of evangelical type churches is seen in their zeal to engage all people from different races, countries, age groups, and socio-economic and educational backgrounds with the message of salvation from God through Jesus Christ. African American Baptist evangelical history describes how they were a vital part of challenging the doctrine of white supremacy during the early nineteenth century:

Due to the emphasis on conversion, an awakened clergy was more important than a learned one, at least in the early days of American Evangelicalism. Blacks seized the opportunity afforded by the willingness of Methodists and Baptists to license them to “exercise their gift.” Whites as well as blacks fell under the powerful preaching of eloquent “brethren in black.” The sight of whites humbled in the dust by blacks was a spectacular, if rare, demonstration of the lesson that “God is no respecter of persons.”<sup>111</sup>

The evangelical messages preached by Black clergy and espoused among Black Baptists clearly articulated their “freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action, and freedom for the development of a true Christian manhood.”<sup>112</sup> The preaching of these freedoms by Black clergy were not only appeals for the salvation of the human soul but also a method of public protest for civil, social, and political rights.

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<sup>111</sup> Raboteau, *The Black Experience*, 94.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

A strength of the evangelical spirituality type is that they are usually on the front line of church planting activities and events. African American Baptist commitment to local and foreign missions has led to new churches being founded, new missions established, and innovated ways to bridge the generational, social, ethnic, and political divides which exist between peoples. These churches are unafraid to journey into the frontier, whether in a literal or figurative sense. They are willing to go into inhospitable and sometimes dangerous environments in order to provide relief for the spiritually lost and suffering. Churches in the evangelical type envision new avenues of approach and messaging in order to excite the interest of their target audience with the message of Christ. They demonstrate the courage to engage people where they are spiritually with a hopeful message of spiritual renewal. In this thesis, these churches break from some of the traditional missions programming found in the majority of African American Baptist churches and nurture spiritual relationships on a non-traditional worship schedule, for example, a schedule adjusted for young adults based upon when they there are available to gather. The churches also embraced social media as a powerful tool for evangelism.

One of the weaknesses of the evangelical type is seen in the ways newly converted people are retained in the church and nurtured to spiritual maturity. A large number of people confessing salvation and joining the church does not guaranty that they will stay in the church fellowship over a long period of time. And if do they remain in the church, there is no guaranty that they will grow spiritually. The present generation of “Nones” is not very interested in church membership but crave deeper relationships that engage them beyond initial or superficial contact. It can become easy for people to “get lost” or “blend in” with the church crowd during a weekly worship event, but the challenge for spiritual formation is that it must occur in people’s daily lives between the worship services.

Another potential weakness of the evangelical type involves the eschatological messages related to the purpose of salvation, which could overshadow the immediate present-day needs of the person or the community. During the time of slavery in America, African Americans were given and also proclaimed a type of Christianity that had great emphasis on salvation as a means of escaping the horrors of slavery and securing peace, justice and a reward in afterlife in heaven. Under the extreme circumstances of slavery, African Americans did not simply accept Christianity in the form it was given to them but were able to transform it in order to develop a spirituality that empowered their survival. They found ways to adapt it to affirm the sacredness of their own lives before God as sons and daughters of God with the rest of humanity. The sacredness of their lives led to:

The formation of an ethos of being and consciousness that uses divine reality as the ultimate ground and reference point for black behavior and belief. Blacks are then able to survive the cruelties of slavery and racism because in their practice of the sacred self, they transcend the absurdities of their human condition.<sup>113</sup>

What is at stake is whether evangelism rises in a way in which it can connect both spiritual realities of earth and heaven together to facilitate genuine spiritual transformation or does it sink to a level where evangelism disconnects those realities and cause the earth reality to suffer deformation in anticipation of the heavenly reality. If the driving focus of evangelism is “so heavenly minded that it is no earthly good,” it has the risk of neglecting the changes that improve life and conditions for the people in the present. This was the danger slaves encountered in the early days of American slavery. In the 1700s, chattel slavery was being justified with religious arguments in support of America’s form of capitalism. In 1706, Cotton Mather, a Harvard trained Puritan pastor, produced an essay, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist That Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity*, in which he

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<sup>113</sup> Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *Soul Survivors: An African American Spirituality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 32.



argues that slave holders should convert their slaves to Christianity and that slaves did not have to be set free after Baptism. For the slaves, conversion to Christianity changed little about their present circumstances:

Mather assured slave owners that baptism was not a license for manumission. Indeed, quite the opposite. Baptism in particular and Christianizing slaves in general had benefits: better and more financially profitable slaves. Mather used the words of the Apostle Paul in Philemon to justify his contention that Christianized slaves could be profitable.<sup>114</sup>

Mather further argued that Africans were slaves because God assigned them this human and spiritual status. If the slaves would accept this state of being and would live “Godly lives by not sinning against God, they would be rewarded with eternal happiness in heaven. It was only in heaven where they would enjoy rest from all of their labors and troubles.”<sup>115</sup>

#### **4.1.3. Contemplative Spiritual Formation Type**

The strength of churches with the contemplative type is their commitment to promoting the importance of education and their involvement in mentoring programs. The churches invest a great amount of time and resources in educational and nurturing programs designed to expose people to ideas and principles that undergird Christian faith. Historically, churches in this spiritual formation type have been great supporters of Black universities and colleges by giving financially and by driving student enrollment. Many of the country’s Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBCU) were established by or affiliated with Black churches.

Churches within the contemplative spiritual formation type have developed and value close affiliation and association with the academy. The strength of these relationships demonstrates for African American Baptists, Christian Theology is the theological pursuit and discussion of ideas and doctrines within the academy and the practical application of theology

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<sup>114</sup> Debra J. Mumford, “Slave Prosperity Gospel.” *Homiletic*, vol.41, no. 1 (2016), 37-38, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS, EBSCOhost (accessed February 28, 2018).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

for spiritual transformation with the church. These churches attempt to hold both of these objectives for the academy and the church in balance so the church can inform the academy concerning the spiritual needs of the congregation and the academy can inform the church concerning theological constructs that assist in recovering spiritual practices that lead to deeper understandings of Christian virtues.<sup>116</sup> Also this relationship allows the academy and church to create a forum, which invites the freshness of ideas and regular conversations about topics of religion and spirituality.

A strength possessed by pastoral leaders of the contemplative spiritual formation type is that these leaders are able to create a new space in worship services and worship environments where focus can be placed on meditative practices. Howard Thurman used his opportunities at Howard University to “experiment” with the chapel worship service by instituting different forms of spiritual meditation. He introduced periods of silence, elements from the arts, humanities, and music, in addition to liturgical dance. The introduction of liturgical dance into a worship service was a radical concept in the 1950s, even on a university campus. The “experiments” Thurman used at Howard University, was implemented after he left the university to serve as pastor of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples (CFAP) in San Francisco, CA. After completing his pastoral service at CFAP, Thurman returned to the academy, Boston University, where again he experimented with delivering the spiritual musings and meditative practices he had acquired in the church with practices in the academy.

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<sup>116</sup> William C. Placher argues the church represents the primary community of Christians, and it follows that it constitutes the primary audience or public for Christian theologians. He further argues that the church is the driving force for public theology. He notes in times of persecution, theologians may be cut off from the wider conversations in academy and society; in other times, they may just find themselves ignored and ridiculed. They can still do their community-shaping, possibly countercultural work in the church. But a theologian who gets no hearing in the church has in some sense failed as a theologian. The cause of the problem may lie in the church rather than with the theologian, but the failure remains a failure. One may serve the church in part by connecting one's Christian conclusions to wider social concerns or making a Christian case in the intellectual world of the academy, but one undertakes such tasks too in large part precisely to serve the church. William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 161.

A weakness of the contemplative spiritual formation type is that because it uses a nontraditional approach in style and format, it requires more time for people to adjust to the differences and the changes in worship, music, administration, etc., especially if they come from a traditional religious background. These churches attempt to appeal to people that transcend religious classifications and traditional denominational affiliations. However, for those who were raised in a particular faith tradition, people still bring their religious histories and experiences with them when engaging new worship and spiritual experiences. They must navigate a new landscape of spiritual experiences that redefine their approach and understanding of what it means to enter the sacred space of the inner spiritual life. This is also the same for people who have no religious background with a faith tradition. It is a new landscape for them also, a journey of discovery which will take a commitment of time in order to complete the course.

A weakness of the contemplative type churches is the way they are perceived by some African American Baptists. These churches tend to be very affluent in their communities, better educated, and more financially stable than the average Black church; which in some cases, cause the church to be viewed as elitist or exclusive. The two contemplative spirituality type churches mentioned in this thesis, the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples and the Abyssinian Baptist Church, are very different in their membership composition. Neither of these churches could be considered exclusive because they appeal to masses of people on a consistent basis. Abyssinian has a membership with a high percentage of African American college graduates and professionals in education, law, medicine, accounting, and business. The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples has a unique membership that consists of many different racial groups who developed great influence in their community through their diversity.

Both churched exhibited a style and format of worship services which differed from the traditional Black Baptist service. For example, the sermon style in contemplative worship services tends to be organized and presented in a lecture style, while traditional sermons in the African American Baptist tradition tends to be “call and response” type with congregational participation. The “call and response” form of oral communication has a structure that was greatly influence by Negro Slave Songs, which embodied complex rhythmic structures, percussive qualities, the polymeter, and syncopation of West Africa.<sup>117</sup> Since the earliest days of Black churches in the North and South regions of the country, there has been dissonance between them in regards to spiritual tone, piety, and worship style of the churches. Many of the slave traditions and customs practiced in the South, for example the “ring-shout,” were considered essential elements of religion and worship for them, but were viewed as “voodoo, heathenish and a disgrace to the race” for Northerners.<sup>118</sup>

Howard Thurman described initial impressions of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples as a “small but eager group numbering fewer than fifty persons...made up of individuals of a variety of specific religious backgrounds: Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and a margin of people who had never had any formal religious affiliation.”<sup>119</sup> The Fellowship Church reflected the immediate community with members who were “public school teachers, skilled and unskilled workers, social workers, businessmen, nurses, and housewives.”<sup>120</sup> Within the first three years, there were college faculty members, doctors, lawyers, and dentists but not in large numbers. The church was neither a “workers” church nor a

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<sup>117</sup> Lawrance W. Levine, “Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Exploration in Neglected Sources.” chap. 4 in *African-American Religion: Interpretative Essays in History and Culture*, ed. Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61.

<sup>118</sup> Raboteau, *The Black Experience*, 100.

<sup>119</sup> Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream: The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 33-34.

<sup>120</sup> Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream*, 34.

“white-collar” church.<sup>121</sup> Its unique signature was that it attracted “an exceptionally heterogeneous congregation.” Thurman’s focus on the worship service was the keystone experience for deepen the spiritual life of the members.<sup>122</sup> It was in these moments, when the quest to enlighten the spirit removed all physical difference of race, socio-economic status, and gender.

## **4.2. Discerning Ministerial Context and Leadership Requirements**

### **4.2.1. Prophetic Leadership**

In the Scriptures, there are descriptions of three very common leadership motifs of prophet, priest, and king. These type of leaders performed specialized functions within the religious, social, and political areas of the Israeli community. These leaders also form the *munus triplex* of Christian Leadership and can be seen in operation among African American Baptists. In every generation, there have been leaders in African American Baptist churches who have been prophetic, those who have cared for the religious life and traditions of the faith, and those who serve as leader/protector of the civil life in the community.

What Walter Brueggemann calls the “alternative prophetic community” in the Book of Jeremiah has similarities with the African American Baptist community. This community is described as “concerned both with criticizing and en-ergizing. On the one hand, it is to show that the dominant consciousness (which I have termed "royal") will indeed end and that it has no final claim upon us. On the other hand, it is the task of the alternative prophetic community to present an alternative consciousness that can energize the community to fresh forms of faithfulness and

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>122</sup> Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick, 1979), 144.

vitality.”<sup>123</sup> From the eighteenth into the mid-twentieth century, African Americans were in an enslaved and oppressed community. The messages from the Scriptures, as well as the voices from their present era prophets, proclaimed a message of liberation and social justice to all oppressed people. The prophetic role in leadership is responsible for challenging social conditions that oppress the community.

Prophetic leadership is often demonstrated in the context of social disturbance and social justice for the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized. It is empowered by prophetic speech or language that expresses the suffering of the people, presents calls to demand justice for the oppressed, and issues a call for social action and social change. The prophetic leader speaks against injustice in many areas of society. The prophet must speak against legislative injustice concerns, which “benefits the few and not the many.”<sup>124</sup> African American civil rights leader, William J. Barber is an example of prophetic leadership in our modern era. Though not a Baptist, Barber speaks for the larger African American community as he exposes the legislative injustices placed upon the disadvantaged, it is leadership that builds transformative, long term coalition relationships which has an agenda that measures success beyond electoral results and “that destroys the myth of extremism.”<sup>125</sup> The goal of prophetic leadership is to raise the issues of the poor in the halls of political power. There is a rich history in the Scriptures of ancient prophets who were called and sent by God to address similar issues of injustice, advocacy for the poor, to require accountability of the powerful, and to deliver messages of a hopeful future in the midst of destruction and decline (i.e. Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 1:13-19; Amos 2:7).

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<sup>123</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 59.

<sup>124</sup> William J. Barber and Barbara Zelter, *Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2014), 13.

<sup>125</sup> Barber, *A Moral Message*, 161.

Kelly Brown-Douglas notes prophetic leadership in the context of the contradictions of racial disparity, in which African-Americans are disadvantaged in full participation and benefits of the American ideal of exceptionalism. According to Brown-Douglas, historically, the nation has been held accountable through prophetic Black voices for its moral treatment of Black people and for it to live out its divine virtues of morality and freedom.<sup>126</sup> And the timing of the appearance of the prophet is crucial. Prophets were raised up from among the members of the community and also experienced the calamities of the people. Barber said, “We know who we are. We know we are called to bear witness at this moment of history.”<sup>127</sup> Prophetic voices appear at strategic moments of history and speak to address the social ills of their “*karios*” time.<sup>128</sup>

#### **4.2.2. Priestly Leadership**

The role of priest in ancient societies in the Near East involved instituting and maintaining the sacrificial system for the operation of the tabernacle. The priests documented the early tabernacle and temple rituals for sacrifices and purification and established the order of priests and the pattern of religious activity among the Israelites. The priest had an intercessory relationship between God and the people which placed the priest at the intersection of heaven and earth.<sup>129</sup> The ancient priestly role included offering sacrifices, performing purification rituals, providing instruction concerning God’s divine will, or delivering a legal ruling.<sup>130</sup> At this junction of the sacred and the secular, the priest is operating to relieve the tensions that exist

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<sup>126</sup> Kelly Brown-Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 207.

<sup>127</sup> Barber, *A Moral Message*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Brown-Douglas refers to “*karios*” time as the time when God called prophets in Israel to speak against justice and to call the nation to accountability. This is a moment of time which occurs in the life of every prophet; a moment of decision and action for the wellbeing and future of the community. Brown-Douglas, *Stand Your Ground*, 209-210.

<sup>129</sup> Marty E. Stevens, *Leadership Roles of the Old Testament: King, Prophet, Priest, and Sage* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 64.

<sup>130</sup> Stevens, *Leadership Roles*, 69.

between humans and their world. This tension is described as “a conflict of gods, a tension between values, a pulling apart of vocations.”<sup>131</sup>

In the African American Baptist context, the pastor generally serves as the overseer or chief elder of the congregation and is charged to govern the church’s worship, training, missions work, and all other concerns that pertain to the wellbeing of the church. The priestly role, in African American Baptist churches aide people in connecting with God and provides instructions on how to maintain a good relationship with God.

### **4.2.3. Kingly Leadership**

In ancient Israel the kings were expected to be committed to following the Torah (in the same way priests and prophets were called to do) and to leading God’s people into faithful relationship with Him. The kingly role was significant in its relationship to the other leadership motifs of prophet and priest. The king represented care for the people by their use of wisdom to execute justice and social, economic, and political reform. King Solomon’s request to God was to receive a “discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong” (1 Kings 3:9). What he received was an extraordinary gift of wisdom and discernment that far exceeded any the wisdom of kings before and after his reign (1 Kings 3:19).

The king was chosen and anointed for divine service like prophets and priests were. In Israel, the king was a temporary representative of the divine king, Jehovah, who ruled over the entire universe. They were commissioned to seek the wisdom of God with the aid of the priests, prophets, and Spirit of God. The major tensions and failures occurred in Israel’s monarchies when Israel’s kings abandoned the wisdom of God and the counsel of the priests and prophets and preformed the duties of king in patterns like the kings in the surrounding countries.

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<sup>131</sup> Carlyle Marney, *Priest to Each Other* (Greenville: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1991), 85.



#### **4.2.4. The Munus Triplex of Christian Leadership and the Spiritual Formation Types**

There are correlations which can be made between the *munus triplex* of Christian Leadership and the African American Baptist spiritual formation types used within this thesis. The leadership roles of prophet, priest, and king display characteristics that closely align with the ways spiritual formation types are seen in operation in the African American community. It is the author's argument that just as the leadership motifs of prophet, priest, and king were complementary and did not operate in isolation of each other in ancient Hebrew society, the same complementary correlation is made with respect to the leadership motifs and the spiritual formation types in African American Baptist churches.

As previously noted in this thesis, African American Baptist churches model all three spiritual formation types simultaneously, however, one spiritual formation type will be more dominate or active in describing the spiritual focus and church activities during a particular timeframe. By comparing prophetic leadership with the Social spirituality type, the priestly leadership with the Evangelical spirituality type, and the kingly leadership with the Contemplative spirituality type does not presuppose that the other leadership motifs are absent in these specific cases. The other leadership motifs are present and in operation but just not dominate in the description of the correlation between the leadership motif and spiritual formation type. For example, prophetic leadership may be the dominate leadership motif in operation in an African American Baptist church but priestly meditation and consecrated service, along with kingly implementation of shared objectives is also in operation. The following correlations between the leadership motifs and the spiritual formation types highlight important characteristics of the dominate leadership motif-spiritual formation type in operation in African American Baptist churches.

#### ***4.2.4.1. Prophetic Leadership and the Social Spirituality Type***

The prophetic role functions in similar ways as the social spirituality type. The prophet was concerned about religious, social, economic, and political justice. The prophet raised the alarm about the discomfort of the community and pleaded for remedies to be offered to the suffering. In like manner, the social spirituality type seeks justice for the oppressed by raising the concern of the people for relief and by executing the plans to meet the need. The social spirituality type must also address community needs across the broad spectrum of socio-economic, racial, and political remedies. This spirituality type must navigate a series of complex issues to bring not only complaint but solutions to a community that may be suffering from despair and hopelessness. Pastoral leaders displaying this type of spirituality are often the leaders who raise prophetic voices and are willing to take risks to their own safety and security for the sake of others.

#### ***4.2.4.2. Priestly Leadership and the Evangelical Spirituality Type***

The priestly role in the *munus triplex* was accountable to God for providing the instructions that governed the relationship between God and the people. The role of the priest was important because there was the danger of sudden death if the boundaries of the sacred and secular were crossed in ways that violated God's commands. We see a biblical illustration of this boundary in Exodus 20:18-26 when the children of Israel were terrified at presence of God at Mount Sinai and were warned not to touch the mountain and the death of Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:6-8 when he touched the Ark of the Covenant, in order to stabilize it and died instantly because only the priest were responsible for its transfer. The evangelical spirituality type closely aligns with the priestly role in these ways. The evangelical type shares the message concerning broken

relationships and the cure for repairing them. They offer the message that calls people to encounter God and to receive the redemption that God offers and that they need.

#### ***4.2.4.3. Kingly Leadership and the Contemplative Spirituality Type***

The kingly role models the nature and character of leadership which executes actions for the wellbeing of community based upon wisdom or wise counsel. The king had the authority to judge between persons in conflict and resolve issues in order to maintain a peaceful just divine order. The contemplative spirituality type best matches the ancient role of the kingly leadership model. Pastoral leaders demonstrating a contemplative spirituality seek the deeper spiritual relationships with God in order to guide worship, provide wise counsel, or to nurture inner spiritual relationships with God in others. The contemplative spirituality type encourages the opportunities with God which cause us to be more sensitive to what the Spirit of God is speaking and doing in us and in the world.

### ***4.3. Leadership Concerns and the Spiritual Formation Types***

In each spiritual formation type, there are leadership challenges and issues that must be addressed. There are some organizational and management styles that all spiritual formation types will share in common. There are specific leadership considerations that apply to the pastoral leaders and how they understand and execute their responsibilities. Additionally, there are organizational structures, ministry management tasks that involve the congregational participation. If we begin with the pastoral leader, there are several leadership and management books that are insightful for the management of churches and ministries. We will consider a few of them and how they can have impact across all spiritual formation types. The congregational composition, personnel, facilities use, the overall organizational plan and mission statement, and the financial capabilities are primary concerns for every pastoral leader.

In “Good to Great,” Jim Collins presents a blueprint for identifying and becoming a Level 5 leader.<sup>132</sup> The leadership hierarchy described is a practical way for any leader to assess what type of leader they are and thereby be able to plan for leadership growth. The objective of the leader is to progress from a Level 1 leader, highly capable leader, to a Level 5 executive leader. The Level 5 leaders are able to channel their ego away from themselves and into the organization. These leaders are “incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves.”<sup>133</sup> Level 5 leaders are not identified as “larger-than-life saviors (I love this term as it relates to pastors and churches) with big personalities” but instead are “modest and willful, humble and fearless.”<sup>134</sup> These leaders display dual characteristics, which on the surface appear to be contradictory but actually complement each other. Humility does not mean timid and modest does not mean lazy. A humble spirit can still be courageous and a modest leader can ascribe to fulfill great plans and hopes. The Level 5 leader can effectively serve within each spiritual formation type with great success, however, it takes a deliberate leadership plan to get there.

For Collins, getting “the right people on the bus” means the development of the team comes before the development of the vision. I did not expect this approach to team building or vision casting but Collins’ research affirmed that having the right people in place (and the wrong people removed) sets the stage for the “bus” to move forward towards the right goals.<sup>135</sup> One of the primary challenges with this concept is time. One may be in an environment where it takes a long time to replace the wrong people with the right ones due to the people that are presently available. Another challenge for the leader is to have a “vision” for the organization in place

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<sup>132</sup> James Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001), 20.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>134</sup> Collins, *Good to Great*, 22.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

while the transition of people is going on. In order to recruit good people to become involved with the ministry of the church, they have to be inspired and encouraged by a vision of where the ministry is headed. In my experience, it is difficult to gather the people without having the vision first.

As a leader, one needs a structure from which a vision statement can be generated. The Hedgehog Concept forces an organization to identify what the most important core principles of the group are, what drives the economic engine, and what the group is most passionate about.<sup>136</sup> This concept indicates that you cannot fulfill primary goals if you don't define them in terms that connect directly to the group's core principles. Leadership requires the ability to identify what an organization does best and the single area of greatest impact. This concept reinforces the fact that an organization will not be successful if it does not identify what it specializes in.

Identifying core principles requires focused time and effort. Feedback from your organization is essential in narrowing down the list of all of the things you do well from the primary things you do best. The time and effort spent will be beneficial for the leadership and the organization because you will adjust your energy and resources from areas that are targeted as having the least impact to projects considered inside of the core principles.

In "Church Leadership" by Lovell Weems Jr., church leadership is organized in terms of vision, team, culture, and integrity. Weems' description of vision provided insight that a vision displays both what is possible for the church but also shows where the church is failing to meet its commitments and core mission.<sup>137</sup> Discussion on the vision with the primary stakeholders is valuable and essential for any project success. The Nine Ways to Build Strong Teams is a great

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<sup>136</sup> Collins, *Good to Great*, 95-96.

<sup>137</sup> Lovett Weems Jr., *Church Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 29.

blueprint for identifying and engaging stakeholder support.<sup>138</sup> This information is critical for building the right team, placing the right people on the bus and casting the vision for the organization. The vision of the church and/or ministry cannot be considered without consideration of the church's culture. The vision is brought to life when the leader is able to understand "the important elements of the church's culture: language, space, symbols, rituals, heroes, and recognitions, daily routines, and cultural network."<sup>139</sup> In other words, the leader cannot create a vision for the church in isolation. In each spiritual formation type, there are a number of cultural factors that impact ministry development, progress, and success.

Lafley and Martin outline that an effective strategy requires a winning aspiration, knowledge of where and how to win, defining the capabilities required to win, and identifying the management systems necessary to win.<sup>140</sup> Many church ministries fail because the mission and vision statements "offer no guide to productive action and no explicit road map to the desired future."<sup>141</sup> This idea may run counter-intuitive to what one may think a mission and vision statement should accomplish. If a leader offers these statements to their organization as the "road map" to somewhere but does not explicitly state what winning looks like, the statements lead nowhere.

It is also insightful for the pastoral leader to evaluate their leadership strengths so they can continue to invest in their strengths, surround themselves with the right people to create the best team and continue grow in understanding their followers needs.<sup>142</sup> In ministry the leader must be aware of the needs of their team members, as well as serve the needs of the church

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<sup>138</sup> Weems, *Church Leadership*, 62.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>140</sup> A.G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin, *Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 15.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Tom Rath, *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, And Why People Follow* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008), 2-3.

members and community. After completing a leadership survey identifying leadership strengths, a leader can develop a team that complements their leadership with the traits they lack. This is the importance of knowing your leadership strengths so you can identify team members who possess the strengths you lack for the good of the organization. It is unrealistic for a ministry leader to assume that they are strong in all areas of ministry all of the time. Weakness in a specific area of ministry does not disqualify a leader from all areas of ministry; however, “without an awareness of your strengths, it’s almost impossible for you to lead effectively.”<sup>143</sup> The ability to focus on our strengths builds confidence and provides a long term benefit to the individual and organization.<sup>144</sup>

Another aspect of effective leadership, especially in ministry is becoming more aware of “the twenty habits that hold you back from the top.” Marshall Goldsmith’s discussion on knowing what personal and professional habits to stop is very insightful. It is easy to empty the box of negative behaviors than to try to fill the box with positive ones.<sup>145</sup> Each day we should create a “not to do list” of the destructive behaviors we desire to remove from our routine. Pastoral leaders called into ministry service to evaluate how information and emotion impact our interpersonal skills and relationships with others. Pastoral leaders must avoid the trap that successful people/leaders fall into with respect to receiving feedback from our organizations, “basically, we accept feedback that is consistent with our self-image and reject feedback that is inconsistent.”<sup>146</sup> If the leader is unable to receive negative feedback or the group refuses to provide it, leadership effectiveness is diminished.

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<sup>143</sup> Rath, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 10.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>145</sup> Marshall Goldsmith, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful* (New York: Hyperion, 2007) Kindle Chapter 4, Location 757.

<sup>146</sup> Goldsmith, *What Got You Here*, Kindle Chapter 6, Location 2083.

It may be required for pastoral leaders to organize ministry structures in ways that first, clearly define the overall ministry priorities and second, in ways that utilize a systems theory approach. A systems theory approach will organize the challenges ministry by viewing the problems in a larger context than the context the problem appears in. In other words, the ministry functions within a larger system and the solution to the problem lies in the larger system.<sup>147</sup> A systems approach to church management allows the leader to see interrelated components and discern areas of dysfunction and develop effective strategies for resolution. This approach will make the pastoral leader more aware of individuals and other leaders who have an impact across multiple systems and the operations of the church which are dependent upon their contributions. At a high level of organizational planning, most ministries can adapt to ministry management in four areas, congregational systems, personnel, facilities, and church finances.<sup>148</sup> The pastoral leader is required to discern the distinction between leaders and managers and respond accordingly to whether a leader or a manager is required to meet the needs of the systems area.<sup>149</sup>

As the pastoral leader is completing the process of evaluating their leadership strengths, organizational effectiveness, and systems management it can also be helpful for them to conduct a congregational study to better assess the strengths and weaknesses of the church as a whole. With the spiritual formation types in mind, the pastoral leadership evaluation coupled with the congregational study will reveal compatibilities and dissonance between the two with respect to which spiritual formation type is predominately in operation.

Each spiritual formation type requires its own management of ministry challenges. For example, issues involving the social spirituality type may require the leadership to master issues concerning facility property management, real estate property acquisitions, legislative and

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<sup>147</sup> John W. Wimberly Jr., *The Business of the Church* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2010), 11-12.

<sup>148</sup> Wimberly, *Business of the Church*, 19-20.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



judicial case management, the formation of civil rights groups and protests, among many other community concerns. A different set of leadership requirements exist for the evangelical type, which may include leadership training and development for staff in a distributed team environment, training for evangelists and missionaries in cultural sensitivity for effective ministry in foreign countries, telecommunications and social media management for evangelism on multi-platforms. In evangelical spirituality where a lot of the evangelical information is posted on social media, it is essential for the leader to be able to evaluate technical needs, technical personnel, and possess the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of church's message on social media. Lastly, the contemplative type leadership issues may include the training of leaders in the practices of meditation, prayer and worship arts. The leader would need to build the right leadership team with members who embrace a nontraditional vision for the church's mission and voice in the community and world.

#### **4.4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

African American Baptist churches have developed a rich spiritual legacy of Christian faith over several centuries. It is difficult, if not impossible, to place a single label on their spirituality that will describe the spiritual character of African American worship, missions, or theological reflections. In order to appreciate the ways African American Baptists have received and interpreted American Christianity and adapted it to sustain their spiritual life, a typology may be used to categorize the similar traits shared between them. The three types used in this thesis are social, evangelical, and contemplative spiritual formation types. These spiritual formation types have been evident and in operation at the local church, the national, and international levels. There are no fixed types for any church and African American churches may exhibit each of the types over a certain period of time.

African American Baptists struggle with finding and agreeing upon a static definition for spiritual formation, as do other Baptists, and people from other Christian faith traditions. In this thesis, I have discussed the different definitions of spiritual formation and how spiritual formation is impacted by culture and society. Within some Christian traditions, spiritual formation is understood by what one does, as a prescribed set of practices or actions. Spiritual formation may be defined by the reading or recitation of certain Scriptures, prayers, or other sacred readings that are designed to invoke a spiritual awakening in the individual or group. Spiritual formation is nurtured by attending and participating in special ritual services like weekly worship services, vesper services, receiving the Lord's Supper, participating in baptism, and by observing Christmas and Easter events. Spiritual formation is also demonstrated by our service to our neighbor through evangelism and social outreach programs.

For others in the Christian family, spiritual formation is cultivated by the mind and what we think about our relationship with God and our neighbor. Spiritual formation is enhanced by the development of the inner life of the soul, a place where we experience intimate communion with God's Spirit. Spiritual formation occurs when people of faith not only reach across the societal barriers of socio-economic status, race, gender, or class but people become present with one another across the barrier in continuous relationship with one another. Spiritual formation is an inner process of transformation that forms human beings into the image of Christ.

The African American Baptist spiritual formation types incorporate both definitions of spiritual formation with embodied habits and practices, as well as through ideas. The American culture and society has played a major role in the shaping of African American Baptist spirituality. The experiences of enslavement, oppression, racial discrimination, social injustice, economic depression, denial of educational opportunities and unemployment has shaped their understanding of their spiritual wellbeing while their physical wellbeing was under assault. They developed an adaptation of Christianity, which nourished their souls and kept their hope of better days alive. Over time, African American Baptists have responded to social migrations and municipal financial crisis that left their communities without resources, except for the aide of African American Baptist churches.

In this study, I am not advocating for any specific spiritual formation type because all types are vital to the life of the church. Every church has each of these types at work in greater or lesser degrees at some time. I am suggesting that for all of these formation types the following recommendations are applicable. On the basis of what this study has disclosed, the researcher offers the following recommendations for pastoral leaders and churches representing social, evangelical, and contemplative spiritual formation types. First, as African American Baptists and

pastoral leaders, we should possess an authentic spirituality, which reflects who we are and what we believe. We must be careful that we are not just replicating spirituality we have seen somewhere else. For example, if we see the operation and results of a ministry in another church and decide to replicate what they've done without committing ourselves to the hard work of producing a detailed analysis of our core principles to see if the ministry matches our spiritual formation type, as well as, meeting the specific needs of our congregation and community, we could be on the pathway of creating an ineffective ministry. Authentic spirituality comes from a genuine and honest spiritual relationship with God and a discernment of the calling we have received.

Second, with a good idea of what our own spiritual formation type is, it may be necessary to go, be present, and observe other churches/ministries that are growing spiritually in some of the ways we want to see growth in our own lives and church. Developing relationships with others has always been a strong point about African American Baptists, whether in missions, social programs, or evangelism. The historical records of national and local Baptists show their success in sharing ministries and resources. Identify partners and mentors in ministry that will challenge you to develop spiritually. Third, we should research the current literature on spiritual formation to discover the ideas, activities, and events other African American Baptists are thinking about to address personal, church, community, local, national, and international needs and challenges in spiritual formation. The research will provide inspiration and opportunities for discussion of the issues of our times.

A fourth recommendation is for African American Baptists to be innovative and faithful in their spiritual formation journey. Do not be afraid to stretch out on faith and follow where the Spirit of God is leading you. Many African American Baptist churches and organizations

highlighted in this thesis were able to create new programs based on the vision of their spiritual leaders. They were able to identify specific congregational and community needs and prayerfully develop ministries which did not previously exist. Be willing to create new paradigms of ministry. And last, research ways to publish your spiritual journey so that not only you and your local congregation can profit from your spiritual insights but that others may be able to also gain insight and spiritual strength through your spiritual journey.

With these recommendations in mind, African American Baptists can continue to build upon a strong spiritual legacy of Christian faith, provide a framework for describing spiritual formation and its impact in the community, and to model Christian spiritual formation through ideas and embodied habits and practices which reflect our understanding of God's calling on our lives.

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