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“Upon this Rock”: architectural,  
material, and visual histories of two  
Black Protestant churches,  
1881-1969

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*Boston University*

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**“UPON THIS ROCK”: ARCHITECTURAL, MATERIAL, AND VISUAL HISTORIES  
OF TWO BLACK PROTESTANT CHURCHES, 1881-1969**

By

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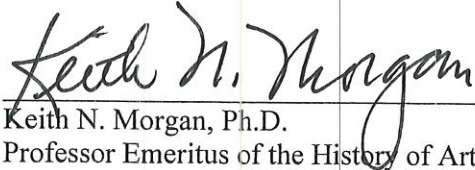
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Doctor of Philosophy

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2017

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Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2017

Major Professor: Keith N. Morgan, Professor Emeritus of History of Art & Architecture

This dissertation comparatively analyzes the architectural and visual histories of two black churches as examples of the material contribution of African Americans to the nation’s built environment. As cultural repositories, Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) (1881-1886), Washington, D.C., and the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1, Pan African Orthodox Christian Church (1925/1957), Detroit, MI, are two sites that represent distinct forms of Black Nationalism. The history of Metropolitan AME uncovers aspects of late nineteenth century Classical Black Nationalism cultural practice. The Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 reflects the revisionist agenda of the Black Cultural Nationalist Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The objective of this study is to expand through a cultural lens the growing body of scholarship that seeks to excavate under-recognized African-American visual and architectural traditions.

This study contrasts different modes of claiming space for cultural affirmation: construction and real estate acquisition. Chapter one offers a rationale for the artifactual interrogation of African American churches and outlines the interdisciplinary methodologies employed in the case studies. In chapter two, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church’s architectural history presents an instance of an African American community using popular architectural and artistic styles in an associative manner to articulate racial advancement. Chapter three documents the aesthetic legacy of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church by considering the sanctuary’s stained glass



window program, mural commissions executed by two rarely-discussed African American artists, donated art objects and the circulation of images of the religious site.

Chapter four explores the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1's 1957 purchase of a 1925 Colonial Revival ecclesiastical structure. This assessment contextualizes the lived interventions of a radical congregation to understand how shifts in material and visual patterns expressed cultural identity. Chapter five critically explores the aesthetic history of the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 that begins with the *Black Madonna and Child* (1967) chancel mural by Glanton V. Dowdell. As the conclusion indicates, African American churches contain visible but hidden histories that expand African American art by introducing new iconographic considerations and revealing new art communities.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE BLACK CHURCH AS CULTURAL REPOSITORY

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. –Matthew 16:18

From its earliest institutional phases to its role as a social refuge, the African American Protestant church has actively engaged in defining its religious visual culture and shaping the American sacred landscape. Canonical narratives of African American art history document the role aesthetic expressions such as portraiture played in African American institution building but little attention has been paid to the architectural and art histories of these religious sites.<sup>1</sup> This study will expand this perspective by considering the constructed environments of two African American churches that reflect a concern for material and aesthetic traditions.

This dissertation will examine two urban African American Protestant churches that are symbolic sites in their specific religious denominations. The first case study will document the architectural and visual history of Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. (Figure 1. 1) Samuel T.G. Morsell was commissioned by the congregation for the Gothic Revival design. This case study will excavate and document an extensive aesthetic tradition that reflects an ideology of Classical Black Nationalism rooted in self-determination.

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943), (New York: Arno Press, 1969); David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); Lisa Farrington, *African American Art: A Visual and Cultural History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Lisa Farrington, “Nineteenth Century Neoclassicism,” *African American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016) 70; Gwendolyn Du Bois Shaw, *Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 89. From the symbolic portraiture of African Methodist Episcopal Church founder Bishop Richard Allen to the austere portraiture of the early African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bishops, this genre records institutional advancement as well as the agency African American exerted in the act of representation. An 1813 stipple engraving of Bishop Richard Allen published by early nineteenth century engraver, John Dainty, depicts the leader with an open Bible and situated in a plush interior. In 1854, African American painter, William Simpson (1818-1872) executed his oil pendant paintings of African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bishop Jermain W. Loguen and his wife, Caroline E. Storum Loguen. The Loguen couple was abolitionist activists, serving as station officers on the Underground Railroad. Art Historian Lisa Farrington interprets the Loguen paintings as demonstrating the conventions of neoclassical portraiture.

Across its lifetime, Metropolitan AME Church accumulated socio-political significance as African American leaders and community allies visited the site from its erection through to the contemporary era. As a congregation with its roots in the nineteenth century, Metropolitan is referred to as the national church of the A.M.E. denomination as well as the cathedral of African Methodism.<sup>2</sup>

The second case interrogates the material and art legacy of the mother church of Black Christian Nationalism: the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. (Figure 1. 2) This 1925 Colonial Revival structure was designed by George D. Mason and purchased by the Shrine of the Black Madonna religious community in 1957. By the 1960s, it was transformed into a center for Black Liberation Theology. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is a congregation with origins during the civil rights movement. As this study will demonstrate, this church quickly progressed beyond the civil rights agenda to adopt Black Nationalist and Pan-African philosophies. As demonstrated across these case studies, the histories contained in African American religious spaces convey the ideologies beneath religious practice and artistic expression. In the analytical context of this examination, these select African American churches will represent the powerful propensity for these sites to serve as cultural repositories.

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<sup>2</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1; Albert Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Direction for the Black Church*, (New York: William & Morrow Company, Inc. 1972). The African Methodist Episcopal denomination was founded in 1816, uniting a network of African American separatist congregations in Pennsylvania and Maryland that opposed discriminatory practice in religious space. By 1818, several South Carolina congregations joined the A.M.E. denomination. The Pan African Orthodox Church is the religious organization of Shrine of the Black Madonna churches and organizations. PAAOC emerged out of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement Cleage led from the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. As early as 1969, Black Christian Nationalism was affirmed with the adoption of the BCN Creed. In 1972, Cleage defined the aims of BCN that are retained in PAAOC: “As Black Christian Nationalist, we seek to change society in order to accomplish the liberation of Black people; and we realize that we are engaged in a struggle for power and survival.”

Both churches actively engaged in debating and determining applicable ideologies for African American advancement ranging from self-determination to Pan-Africanism.<sup>3</sup> Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 have rich histories as politically charged sites that sustain a visual culture. These congregations advanced political agency, education and economic development. These churches also acted as art patrons by commissioning murals. The murals, in addition to a broad range of art objects and images embedded in the life of the churches, reveal a visual culture that expands notions of African American art. Moreover, photographic representations of both congregations document how the material life of these spaces were constructed and captured to convey notions of identity. Both religious sites are cultural archives that exemplify the diverse landscape of black religion and the aesthetics that undergird these sacred spaces.

In the earliest phases of this research in 2013, the scope of this study included four African American churches. In the initial phase of research, this dissertation documented and

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<sup>3</sup>Wilson J. Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: from Revolution to Marcus Garvey*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 2-3; Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (1973), Third Edition, (New York: Orbis, 1998); Bridget R. Cook, "Pan-African Politicians in African American visual art: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 2 (2006): 185. What unites the two churches in this study is their exploration of Black Nationalist ideology. Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was a beacon for a more conservative notion of Classical Black Nationalism that deemphasized the pursuit of a black nation-state. Moses defines Classical Black Nationalism as follows: "Classical black nationalism, which reached its fullest expression in the years from 1850 to 1925, may be defined as the effort of African American to create a sovereign nation-state and formulate an ideological basis for a concept of national culture...too its adherents it provided a means of preserving shreds of dignity and self-respect in the face of the almost universal military, technological, and economic domination of whites over blacks...In addition to their religious historicism, nineteenth-century black nationalists frequently demonstrated an interest in developing a distinctive tradition in art, architecture, music and letters." On the other hand, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 was an influential site in defining Black Nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s. This form of Black Nationalism was defined by black power and contesting oppressive power structures. Gayraud Wilmore documents the Rev. Cleage was instrumental in defining and developing an applicable strategy Black Liberation Theology. The Black Liberation Theology movement was a revisionist movement that critically assessed the African American church's relationship to dominant American theologies and religious practices. Cooks defines Pan-Africanism as "a universal freedom movement for people of African descent. It is an ideology whose goal is unity and solidarity among people who can claim Black Africa as an ancestral homeland and cultural foundation."

interpreted the material and visual history of Metropolitan AME Church, Abyssinian Baptist Church (New York, New York), Mason Temple Church of God in Christ (Memphis, TN) and Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. The project developed according to access to the structure and archival holdings that document the history of the church. Metropolitan AME Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 are underexplored sites that constitute spheres of religious and cultural influence with distinct ideological histories. These two religious communities developed during two periods characterized by an increased focus on the contesting misrepresentation of African Americans in mainstream American visual culture. As the visual and material record reveals, Metropolitan AME Church cultivates Black Classical Nationalism aesthetics in the years following Reconstruction and through the early Civil Rights period. The Shrine of the Black Madonna #1 reflects the transition from the modern Civil Rights movement to Black Cultural Nationalism.

This dissertation sets out to give material specificity to the African American congregations that are often mentioned in histories as merely settings or backdrops. These sacred spaces are rarely understood as catalytic, living, calculated environments that facilitate activities that sustain the physical, spiritual and economic condition of an oppressed people. African American churches, along with other institutions such as historically black colleges and universities, are sites of representation and can serve as indices of African American identity, engaged in local, regional and national dialogue. Influenced by scholarship on the black church by W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson and Authur H. Fauset, this dissertation considers the

cultural, aesthetic and economic facets of two significant African American Protestant congregations by investigating material and visual histories.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that very few scholars of material culture or art and architectural history have examined the African American church as a repository of historic artifacts and cultural expressions, religious philosopher James A. Noel, an authority on African-American religions, developed a philosophical framework to understand these specific local instances of African American material culture in his 2009 book, *Black Religion and the Imagination of Matter in the*

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<sup>4</sup> Du Bois, *Negro Church: report of a social study made under the direction of Atlanta University together with the proceedings of the eighth conference for the study of Negro problems* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903); David L. Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, (New York: H. Holt, 1993); Aldon D. Morris, "Sociology of race and W.E.B. Dubois: the path not taken," *Sociology in America: A History*, Calhoun, Craig J. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Reiland Rabaka, *Du Bois's Dialectics: Black Radical Politics and the Reconstruction of Critical Social Theory*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); W. E. B. Du Bois and Robert Wortham, *The Sociological Souls of Black Folk: Essays* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011); Carter Godwin Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (1921) (Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/woodson/menu.html>>(accessed: April 14, 2016); Arthur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (1944) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); Edward E. Curtis and Danielle Brune Sigler, *The New Black Gods: Arthur Huff Fauset and the Study of African American Religions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). W. E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) was one of the most influential philosophers and authors of the twentieth century. After graduating from Fisk University, Du Bois went on to be the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University. Across his career which spanned sixty years, Du Bois remained at the forefront of addressing the race problem and African American culture across sociology, journalism, philosophy and aesthetics throughout the twentieth century. In 1903, he examines the African American church across his publications. Du Bois was also instrumental in mobilizing African American protest and activism from his efforts in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to his leadership in promoting Marxist thought. Carter G Woodson (1875-1950) was one of the driving forces behind the field of African American History. Woodson received his A.B. and M.A. from University of Chicago, in 1907 and 1908, respectively. He earned his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in 1912. Woodson contributed to the study of African American history by founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (1915), *Journal of Negro History* (1916), Black History Month (originally initiated as Negro Week in 1926) and *Negro History Bulletin* (1937). In 1921, Woodson put forth a critical history of the black church as a cultural institution in *A History of the Negro Church*. Arthur H. Fauset (1899-1983) was a University of Pennsylvania trained anthropologist who comparatively analyzed alternative African American religious communities during the 1940s. His dissertation was published under the title *Black Gods of the Metropolis*. Curtis and Sigler describe Fauset's influence as follows: "Fauset's *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, though not without its own flaws, provides a model that by and large accepts a variety of faiths on their own terms and seeks to understand what meaning these faiths have for their adherents...Fauset saw the seeds of effective social and political protest in the activism of cult members." Although Fauset did not pursue a career in academia and receded into obscurity, he is recognized among scholars of African American religious history as one of the innovative minds demonstrating the potential of social science analysis in investigating religious practice.



*Atlantic World*. Noel advances the notion of materiality as outlined in Charles H. Long's seminal text, *Significations: Signs, Symbols and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (1986), presenting a complex tradition of religious material production that conveys the tensions material negotiation required.<sup>5</sup> Noel argues:

[According to Long]...The origin of race and the origin of religion are connected to these materialities and the Atlantic World is the geopolitical space where these materialities make their historical appearance... My contention is the methodological problem in the study of black religion has to do primarily with the issue of how one understands the religious subject and object...Black folks were imagined as objects through the discursive practices of their oppressors and they overcame objectification through their own imagination and religious practices...In placing the genesis of black religion within the historical framework of the 'long sixteenth century,' I am viewing it as one of modernity's fundamental components. I assert a thick description of black people's religious experience that indicates black identity or, if you prefer,—black consciousness—was constituted through their religious experience. Phenomenologically speaking, black religion and black people appeared simultaneously. Therefore, black religion is involved and implicated in the manifestation of the new form of materiality represented by black people themselves. This appears in the midst of the contacts and exchanges of the Atlantic World.<sup>6</sup>

According to Noel's interpretation, there is an intrinsic relationship between black religious consciousness and material practices as evidenced by a myriad of articulations found throughout

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<sup>5</sup> Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 140. Charles H. Long (1926- ) is a philosopher and religious studies scholar. Across his career, he has challenged conventional, singular, provincial interpretations of African American religious practice. During the 1960s, he was an integral figure at University of Chicago, collaborating with Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa to found the international publication *History of Religions*. In *Significations: Signs Symbols and Images in the Interpretations of Religion*, he investigates how meaning is constructed across cultural or racial difference. Long states, "I am saying that the visibility of the black community in America opens us to a range of cultural materials and methodological positions that would not be possible if this were not the case. I am saying that the hegemony of Western Christian categories and thought models has come to an end...I am saying the kind of provincialism stemming from the aforementioned hegemony might be overcome if we take seriously the otherness manifested through and in the visibility of the black community. The visibility of the black community in America is out opening to a wider humanity, historically and contemporaneously." For the author, visibility allows for more agency in cultural definition. This visibility counters the history of invisibility enforced by Western power structures. Long is an important figure in outlining a deconstructive analytical framework to facilitate a more expansive notion of African American spirituality.

<sup>6</sup> James A. Noel, *Black Religion and the Imagination of Matter in the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), x-xi; Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

the African Diaspora. The author complicated these processes by grounding this act of inscribing meaning in the history of objectification and material exchange of the black body across the Atlantic Ocean. Noel explores the tensions at the core of African American religious material production and provides a framework for decoding material and visual strategies employed by the black church in the United States.

From the late nineteenth through the twentieth century, Protestant African American church construction was an effort to materialize communal socioeconomic religious identities. This dissertation will ask the following questions of these two spaces: Does this structure represent a continuation of older traditions or a reinterpretation? How has the edifice been designed or altered to reflect the material or theological needs of the congregation? How does the style and design compare to other church building projects of the same period?

By outlining the architectural histories and material evolutions of these churches, this study aims to document the cultural objects and extract the historical insights these artifacts and sacred spaces contain. These case studies demonstrate how African American communities were not only patrons of the fine and decorative arts, but also active participants, employing contemporary architectural and artistic vocabularies to alter the urban landscape. In analyzing these sites as cultural repositories, these spaces exist as historical and cultural documents that represent the material, spatial and social negotiations intrinsic to material expressions of black religious consciousness and communal identity.

The objectives of this dissertation are twofold. First, this project will examine how African Americans commissioned, conceptualized, constructed and repurposed spaces while also redefining architectural and visual vocabularies. Secondly, when the archive or site allows, this dissertation will consider decorative religious objects which include pews, stained-glass

programs, murals and ritual objects. Placing these spatial and object-based histories alongside written and oral accounts will result in a thick description and interpretation of the black church of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Scholars of Black religion such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Zora Neale Hurston and Arthur Hale Fauset traced and debated the centrality of the black church to cultural production.<sup>7</sup> This study aims to supplement the aforementioned body of scholarship by documenting an architectural and material schema that demonstrates the physical augmentation and material advancement of these spaces. Proceeding from the accepted notion that the network of black churches served as the nucleus of African American communities, this study will also survey a host of social organizations that called these religious structures home as well as the activities and rituals that united these secular-sacred spaces.

The intention of “Upon this Rock” is to provide a “thick description” of two specific instances of African American religious communities forging and sustaining architectural and visual traditions. These examples complicate the standing perception of the range of African American art and architecture. These spaces are cultural archival sites, sheathed in popular architectural styles of the day. Both churches preserve objects and images that represent a myriad of experiences within the religious community, across several generations. This dissertation

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<sup>7</sup> Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003); Deborah G. Plant, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Biography of the Spirit* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007). Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) was an author and an integral figure in defining African American culture during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to being trained as an anthropologist, Hurston helped sustain African American folklore and even recover African elements in cultural expression of the African Diaspora. She also recognizes the church as a cultural reservoir. Zora Neale Hurston employs an anthropological approach to investigating and engaging the Southern black Protestant church and worship experience in *The Sanctified Church*, written in the late 1940s (but published in 1981). One of the early scholars noting the African retentions present in the Holiness-Pentecostal Church in the South, Hurston’s observations, interviews, and interpretations inform my analysis. Furthermore, Hurston’s synthesis of the worship experience as possessing artistic aspects and existing as a diverse ever-changing performative art form is an idea.

develops an analytical paradigm for interrogating African American Protestant religious space erected, inherited or purchased throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These sacred spaces, emblematic of the material facets of “the Black Sacred Cosmos,” are replete with centuries of lived history, or *ashè*.<sup>8</sup>

### **From Meetinghouse to Cathedral: Boston’s African Meetinghouse as African American Religious Material Precedent**

In order to understand the intervention of both Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, it is important to outline the material history of existent historic African American churches constructed before the Civil War. The architectural traditions of African American churches emerge from the early activities of African American benevolent societies at the turn of the nineteenth century. Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler outline one of the few chronologies on the earliest religious structures built for and by African Americans in the introduction to their text, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History*. Situating these early churches within the broader architectural landscape, the authors note:

Whether by design or a result of economic limitations, the churches African Americans built prior to the Civil War were, for the most part, boxlike frame or brick buildings in the meetinghouse style. Indeed, the first house of worship used by Richard Allen and the members of what became the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (the mother church of the A.M.E. denomination) was a blacksmith shop that had been moved to Sixth and Lombard Street in Philadelphia. The First African Baptist Church in Boston (Also known as the Abolition Church) was a simple Federal-style building, constructed in 1805, that measured forty by forty-eight feet, about the size of an early Puritan meetinghouse...The First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia was also

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, “Black Saints Go March In: Yoruba Art and Culture in the America,” *Flash of the Spirit: African & Afro-American Art & Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984)5-9. The author defines Robert Farris Thompson defines *ashè* as “...spiritual command, the power-to-make0things-happen, God’s own enabling light rendered accessible to men and women.” By appropriating this Yoruba concept to interpret African American churches, this dissertation will consider the church as a cultural repository that exemplifies a spiritual legacy with antecedents across the Black Atlantic.

built by an independent black congregation. Erected 1859 at a cost of twenty-six thousand dollars, it was a boxlike building constructed in the form of a Greek temple with a classical pediment; tower and projecting base were added later.<sup>9</sup>

This chronology highlights significant efforts from historic congregations. These structures represent an early phase of African American ecclesiastical traditions that established specific cultural and economic patterns. But when examining the structural histories of these congregations, the narrative becomes broader.

For example, Lovelace & Wheeler cite the 1794 founding of Philadelphia's "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. Church in a retrofitted wooden blacksmith shop as a starting point for African American architectural religious activity. The history of Philadelphia's African Free Society, the benevolent organization that birthed the A.M.E. denomination, names an additional congregation that emerged in 1794: St. Thomas African Episcopal Church.<sup>10</sup> According to the St. Thomas church history, a two-story, square, gable-roofed structure illuminated by rounded arch windows, was dedicated on July 17, 1794.<sup>11</sup> St. Thomas's dedication preceded the inaugural worship service of the retrofitted sanctuary of the first "Mother" Bethel. Although both of these structures were replaced several times throughout the nineteenth century, they demonstrate that at the

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Loveland and Otis Wheeler. *Meetinghouse to Megachurch: a material and cultural history*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Anne S. Butler, "Black Fraternal and Benevolent Societies in Nineteenth-Century America" *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision* Tamara L. Brown, Gregory Parks, and Clarenda M. Phillips, eds. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).; Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1780-1830," *The Massachusetts Review*. 20, (Autumn, 1979): 603-625. The Free African Society (FAS) is an example of early (late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) benevolent societies for African Americans in the nation. This institution birth both "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. Church and St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. An image of the first home of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, c.1795. can be found at <<http://www.aescst.org/about.htm>> (accessed: September 2, 2016).

This structure was the home to the other religious community created as a result of the Free African Society: St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. There is not an extensive architectural history on his congregation.

<sup>11</sup> Unidentified author, "About us...History," <[www.aescst.org/aboutus](http://www.aescst.org/aboutus)>, date accessed: September, 14, 2014. The structure describe has since been demolished.

earliest moments of African American denominational history there was a conscious effort to establish and refine their material imprint on the urban landscape.<sup>12</sup>

The oldest surviving African American religious structure in the United States is Boston's African Meeting House, erected in 1805.<sup>13</sup> The African Meeting House will serve as a point of departure for this dissertation's exploration of African American church architectural precedents as it reflects attitudes toward architectural style, design and use of space.<sup>14</sup> Although architectural historians debate the attribution of the African Meeting House, the historic structure report suggests that Asher Benjamin's "Plan & Elevation for a Townhouse" from *The American Builder's Companion* (1806) bear similarities with the design model for the African Meeting House.<sup>15</sup> The African Meeting House is a brick structure, with four bays dividing each wall and

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<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel K. Love. *History of the First African Baptist Church, From its Organization, January 20 1788 to July 1, 1888* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina University Press, 1999) 82. Stain glass windows also referenced on church's website, <http://firstafricanbc.com/history.asp>. Despite being rebuilt in the mid-nineteenth century, First African Baptist (Savannah, GA) and First Baptist Church (Petersburg, VA) are two additional historic congregations Loveland and Otis recall in their overview of African American churches. The architect or builder of this structure is unknown. The church contains a basement, a two story tower and, wooden sanctuary floors with an African-derived, perhaps Kongo, cosmogram engraved into the wood grain. This church is an important site in the black sacred cosmos that reveals a strong material and visual history.

First African Baptist (Savannah, GA) typifies the congregation that consistently materially augmented their edifice as the current program of stained glass windows featuring the portraits of church founders was installed between the years, 1871 and 1884.

<sup>13</sup> Artist not identified, *Earliest image of the African Meeting House*, 1843, engraving, published in *The African Meeting House Historic Structure Report*, pg 12. Structure erected 1805. This early African American religious site reflects African Americans engagement with popular American architectural styles. It also represents the history of African Americans establish their own independent religious spaces that allowed for the cultivation of African American society and culture.

<sup>13</sup> The African Meeting House is also referred to as the First African Baptist Church, First Independent Baptist Church and Abolition Church.

<sup>14</sup> The African Meeting House is also referred to as the First African Baptist Church, First Independent Baptist Church and Abolition Church.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara A. Yocum, *The African Meeting House Historic Structure Report*, (Lowell: North Atlantic Region, National Park Service, 1994)10. Yocum connects the design to Asher Benjamin or another local Boston architect in this structural report.

Neoclassical details throughout the exterior, including rounded blind arches and a projecting cornice.<sup>16</sup>

Consistent with the architectural details that characterize late eighteenth century, box-like sacred structures, the African Meeting House's sanctuary is organized with the pulpit as focal point along the back wall, which was originally pierced and framed by two large windows.<sup>17</sup> Slightly curved pews seating 600 congregants face the pulpit, in addition to a three-sided gallery with two to three rows of seating. Establishing a rich material history, the pulpit was "salvaged material reused from the 1736 West Church," an earlier building owned by a nearby white congregation.<sup>18</sup> Structural analysis revealed the absence of a foyer as there was evidence the pews extended to the entrance wall. This is consistent with early meetinghouses where, "[t]here was no narthex; neither was there a chancel separating the priest and choir from the laity, as in the liturgical church."<sup>19</sup> At the beginning to the nineteenth century, this African American community employed popular architectural vocabularies and adapted spatial formulations to meet their evolving needs.<sup>20</sup>

The African Meeting House's design demonstrates attentiveness to the use of the space as a multifunctional center that would host religious services on the upper level; the first school for

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<sup>16</sup> Yocum, 2; Reference to Classical details, From Loveland and Wheeler, *Meetinghouse to Megachurch: a material and cultural history*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Loveland and Wheeler, *Meetinghouse to Megachurch: a material and cultural history*, 7; Unidentified photographer, Photograph of recent historic renovation of African Meeting House, Boston Massachusetts, as sanctuary was restored to its 1855 renovated appearance, n.d, digital photograph. <<http://www.afroammuseum.org/>> (accessed: September 3, 2016). The photograph published on the Museum of Afro-American History shows Boston's African Meeting House after a twenty-first century historic renovation. Both churches featured in this dissertation share design similarities that reflect the multifunctional aspects of black churches served.

<sup>18</sup> Yocum, 80. In addition to the sanctuary that could seat six hundred people. There are no existing visual representations of the appearance of the sanctuary in 1806.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; African Meeting House, "Restoration of the African Meeting House," <<http://www.afroammuseum.org/RestorationoftheAfricanMeetingHouseBoston.htm>> (accessed: August 20, 2016). The twenty first century restoration has recreated the 1855 appearance of the sanctuary.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Lounsbury, "God is in the Details: The Transformation of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Nineteenth Century America," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 13 (2006): 1-21.

Black children and domestic quarters were housed on the ground level. The lower level spaces would later provide income for the congregation.<sup>21</sup> Based on archival data, the historic structure report suggests that it was one of the earliest innovative multifunctional plan in New England aside from the first Roman Catholic church in Boston.<sup>22</sup> This compartmentalization of space is emphasized by the inclusion of separate entry ways.<sup>23</sup> One of the few first-hand descriptions of sanctuary décor characterizes the space as “very plain and commodious.”<sup>24</sup> The church provided large meeting space for Abolitionist meetings and public addresses throughout the nineteenth century. Despite the success in creating a sanctuary that counters the later patterns of segregation, Boston’s African Meeting House still reflects the encounters with dominant racist ideologies. For instance, segregated seating was the governing principle for the dedication services of the African Meeting House, relegating African Americans to the galleries.<sup>25</sup>

“Upon this Rock” sets out to document and analyze the material and social histories at the core of African American religious institutions. Both Metropolitan AME Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 provided platforms for the social and religious activities concerned with African American advancement. These religious communities extended a tradition initiated by pioneering congregations like Boston’s African Meeting House. This project aims to provide a framework for documenting and interpreting African American religious spaces as sites where dynamic notions of African American identity are conveyed across generations.

## **Methodology**

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<sup>21</sup>Yocum, 21 &25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid,17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 69.

<sup>25</sup> Robert C. Hayden, “First African Baptist Church: the African Meetinghouse,” *Faith, Culture and Leadership: a History of the Black Church in Boston, Historical Booklet* (Boston, MA: Boston Branch of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1983) 4.



“Upon this Rock” will analyze the subject utilizing the interdisciplinary perspectives from black church historiography, architectural history and American visual and material culture studies. Each case study will begin by exploring the construction or alteration history of the specific structure. Employing traditional art and architectural historical frameworks, each material investigation will identify architectural and decorative arts styles and the individuals responsible for influencing these decisions. The two churches at the center of this dissertation helped promote the use of specific ecclesiastical material and visual strategies as they served as both stylistic and cultural beacons throughout “the Black sacred cosmos.”<sup>26</sup> In this way, this scholarly inquiry will focus on these two architectural and decorative masterpieces in an effort to establish a spectrum or continuum of African American religious material expression.

### Black Church Historiography

This dissertation emanates from the aforementioned attention to material practices evident in the annals of African American church studies, originally expressed by W.E.B. Du Bois. Historian and sociologist, Du Bois investigated the “material relationships” among African American religious communities in the early years of his career.<sup>27</sup> In fact, in 1903, two landmark publications authored by Du Bois inaugurated a scholarly discourse on the history of the African American church: the Atlanta Conference study, *Negro Church*, and the canonical text, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

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<sup>26</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience*, 2-3, 7. The authors define the “black sacred cosmos” as an interpretive model for understanding African American religious practice. Across this religious landscape the “black sacred cosmos” reveals “distinctive forms of culture and worldviews as parallels rather than replications of the culture in which they were involuntary guest.” Lincoln and Mamiya also encourage investigation of the “close relationship between the black sacred cosmos and black culture,” in an effort to eschew restrictive binary categories of sacred and secular.

<sup>27</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “A Note on the Text,” *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), xxx.

Employing sociological research methods such as on-site surveys and interviews prominent in his 1899 study of African Americans in Philadelphia, *Negro Church* contains hundreds of brief case-studies to establish the contours of African American religious communities.<sup>28</sup> Du Bois gathered data through surveys and interviews that allowed him “...to ascertain something of the geographical distribution of this race, their occupations and daily life, their homes, their organizations, and, above all, their relation to their million white fellow-citizen.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to the material accounts in Du Bois’s writings on religion which allow one to see patterns across regions, *Negro Church* illustrates sensitivity to the financial investment of these communities in order to create a space that reflected their religious, socio-political identities.

As a forerunner to the rapid development of American schools of sociology, Du Bois promoted an interdisciplinary approach to writing history that considered material sources and sociological data alongside textual and oral accounts, presenting a dynamic account of the history and state of this “invisible institution.”<sup>30</sup> Du Bois opens the text with this statement affirming the essential cultural role of churches:

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<sup>28</sup> Du Bois. “Methodology (1899),” in *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*, David Levering Lewis, ed. (New York: H. Holt and Co, 1995), 158. Originally published in *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899).

<sup>29</sup>Du Bois, “The Philadelphia Negro,” *W.E.B. Du Bois: a reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis, (New York: H. Holt, 1995), 159; Elijah Anderson, “Introduction to the 1996 Edition of *The Philadelphia Negro*,” *The Philadelphia Negro*(1899), W.E.B. Du Bois, author, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) iv-xxvi. . Du Bois’s 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro* predates Robert E. Park and the Chicago School of urban sociology (1920s-1950s). In one of his earliest application of social science methods, Du Bois describes his intention behind the study with these words: “The Negro problem was in my mind a matter of systematic investigation and intelligent understanding.” This model would form a foundation for his sociological explorations as director of the Sociological Laboratory at Atlanta University.

<sup>30</sup> Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: the “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Anderson, “Introduction to the 1996 Edition of *The Philadelphia Negro*,” *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) xviii; Werner J. Lange, “W.E.B. Du Bois and the First Scientific Study of Afro-America,” *Phylon* (Second quarter, 1983): 135-146. Raboteau popularized this notion of “the Black church” as an “invisible institution” in this 1978 publication. Both Anderson and Lange document Du Bois’s previous overlooked contribution to the development of the discipline of anthropology and sociology in the United States. Revisionist histories by scholars such as Lange have demonstrated that Du

The Negro Church is the only social institution of Negroes which started in the African forest and survived slavery; under the leadership of the priest or medicine man, afterwards the Church preserved in itself the remnants of African tribal life and became after emancipation the center of Negro social life. So that today the Negro population of the United States is virtually divided into church congregations which are the real units of race life.<sup>31</sup>

Du Bois's reflection establishes an important methodological and interpretive position that insists on the existence of religious traditions that can be analyzed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Furthermore, he defines the Negro church as a network of religious "units" with discernible material and experiential facets.

The material specificity of what was commonly known as the "Negro Church" for the greater part of the twentieth century also appears to be concern for Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, published only one month before the Eighth Atlanta Conference's monograph, *Negro Church*. In *The Souls of Black Folks*, Du Bois aims to "sketch...the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive." Du Bois reveals his interest in the relationship between material landscapes and the African American religious experience.<sup>32</sup> In the chapter entitled, "Of the Faith of Our Fathers," the author alternates between material description and participant observation narration, remarking, "And most striking to me, as I approached the village and the little plain church perched aloft, was the air of intense excitement that possessed that mass of black folks."<sup>33</sup> Du Bois describes the southern Protestant church as still situated deep within the slave landscape beyond the former antebellum work fields, occupying the same spaces of the earliest religious gatherings of enslaved Africans in the woods surrounding plantations.

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Bois established the foundation for social science studies of African American communities across almost fifty-three publications, penned between 1894 and 1915.

<sup>31</sup> Du Bois, *Negro Church: report of a social study made under the direction of Atlanta University together with the proceedings of the eighth conference for the study of Negro problems* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), ii. Du Bois drafted this statement during the third meeting of the Atlanta Conference as a justification for exploring the topic of African American religious communities.

<sup>32</sup> Du Bois, "The Forethought," *Souls of Black Folk*, xxxi.

<sup>33</sup> Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 140.

Du Bois furthers his material emphasis with a thick description of “the ‘First Baptist,’” church of “a small Virginia town,” in the subsequent pages.<sup>34</sup> Du Bois describes this “social, intellectual and economic centre” in the following passage: “...a roomy brick edifice seating five hundred or more persons, tastefully in Georgia pine, with a carpet, a small organ, and stained glass windows. Underneath is a large assembly room with benches. This building is the central club-house of a community of a thousand or more Negroes.”<sup>35</sup> Employing his signature poetic prose, Du Bois retains a commitment to detailing the material and spatial components of this chief institution.

In addition to Du Bois’s examinations, the early cultural and sociological studies of Authur H. Fauset’s *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (1944) have directly influenced the methodological structure and analytical queries of this dissertation.<sup>36</sup> Forty-one years after the publication of *Negro Church*, Authur Hale Fauset’s investigation of peripheral African American religious communities in Philadelphia illustrated the potential for comparative analysis in case-studies. *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (1944) has informed the conception of this dissertation in several ways.<sup>37</sup> First, within the introductory paragraphs of the text, Fauset acknowledges the visible, material presence of African American religious spaces as transformative agents in the northern urban landscape, in his multisensory description of space and experience: “The signs are unmistakably present: frequently a store-front, probably with improvised sign; the sound of tambourines, drums, wind and string instruments; the noise of unrestrained singing and shouting

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 142.

<sup>36</sup> Authur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1944).

<sup>37</sup> Authur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1944).

and the dancing silhouettes. Sometimes the meeting place is more pretentious, and on occasion the ritual may be relatively subdued.”<sup>38</sup> This close attention to the material presence of these communities is complimented by ethnographic observations concerning religious gesture and ritual. “Upon this Rock” proceeds from this premise that African American sacred spaces are defined and activated by specific material and spatial traditions. This study aims to document these traditions through description and interpretation.

The second aspect of Fauset’s study that has direct bearing on this dissertation is the methodological approach and interpretative lens. The author uses ethnographic data from observation and interviews to identify similarities and differences across African American religious expression.<sup>39</sup> Framing his study from the perspective of an outsider to each community, Fauset explains this research method: “In obtaining the data utilized in this study, the author spent a period of more than two years making scores of visits to the places of worship, as well as to the homes of numerous members and leaders of various cults.”<sup>40</sup> *Black Gods of the Metropolis* exemplifies the potential of ethnographic case-studies of local religious communities and sociology of religion methodologies to enhance our understanding of African American religious practice and expand the boundaries of American religious history.

In terms of the ethnographic components of this dissertation, the data collected comes from site visits and research trips. Data from visits during worship services established a base for both sites.<sup>41</sup> Each case study is also informed by interviews with the current and former pastors,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> I had consistent open access to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, both during and outside of worship service. I attended about four worship services in a research capacity. One important visit featured the congregation’s welcome of President Barack Obama. I was also able to attend denominational celebrations such as the retirement celebration of former Metropolitan pastor, the Bishop William P. DeVeaux. Both occasion incorporated material and visual expressions as the concluding chapter of this dissertation will

church leaders and members, when permitted. In some cases, interviews of scholars associated with the denominations were conducted. The objective is to recreate the structural history of each church, considering personal and institutional accounts alongside architectural and visual primary documents.

### Architectural History

The interdisciplinary queries prevalent among architectural historians Dell Upton, Louis P. Nelson and more recently Mabel O. Wilson are at the foundation of this dissertation. Dell Upton's *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (1986) provides a methodological paradigm that documents and interprets stylistic patterns among colonial Anglican congregations.<sup>42</sup> Emphasizing the interest in “a specific group of churches and furnishings,” Upton sets out “to ask how we might understand artifacts—buildings and their contexts—in ways that do justice to as many aspects of these artifacts as possible.”<sup>43</sup> In an effort to recreate the religious landscape of a given period, this dissertation will contextualize each structure within the architectural activity of the city and the denomination as well as other historic churches in the surrounding area. The arrangement of each architectural chapter (chapter two and chapter four) will proceed in a manner similar to Upton's text; examining the emergence of each congregation, the erection and furnishing of the contemporary edifice, and the use of this space.

In the introduction of Louis P. Nelson's anthology, *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Spaces*, he suggests “...a method of study that examined sacred places as historically specific cultural constructions with powerful yet unstable meanings that are embedded in the

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illustrate. After initial visits to the structure, site visits, examining the sanctuary specifically, may be supplemented with observing several weekly services streamed live via the individual church's website.

<sup>42</sup> Dell Upton, *Holy and Profane Things: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1986), xxi.

<sup>43</sup> Upton, *Holy and Profane Things: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1986), xxi.

identity of the cultures which produced them.”<sup>44</sup> “Upon this Rock” will examine the socioeconomic and cultural influences that determined the style and aesthetic of the select churches examined in this study. Akin to the scholarship found in *American Sanctuary*, which was heavily influenced by David Hall’s notion of “lived religion,” this dissertation will reconstruct these histories using an assemblage of voices, ranging from institutional sources to reflections from laity captured in interviews, oral histories and archival material such as journal and diary entries.<sup>45</sup> The scholarship produced by these architectural historians asks questions concerning how identity, ideologies and, in some cases, theologies are expressed across space and material. This dissertation contributes to this scholarly discourse.

In 2007, *The Winterthur Portfolio* advanced the study of American religious material with the publication of Louis P. Nelson’s essay, “Sensing the Sacred: Anglican Material Religion in Early South Carolina.” The author investigates material religion which he defines as the beliefs and practices working together to establish sacred space and communicate theological ideas.<sup>46</sup> He traces a specific set of architectural forms and decorative objects, including pews and windows. In addition to the research design, Nelson outlines an interpretive model that undergirds this inquiry into African American religious practices. In his historical analysis, the author considers the act of creating sacred space as a power-oriented action containing the potential for expressing economic agency as well as socio-cultural definition.<sup>47</sup> Nelson’s interpretation of the radical

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<sup>44</sup> Louis P. Nelson, “Introduction,” *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 4-5; David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Louis P Nelson, "Sensing the Sacred: Anglican Material Religion in Early South Carolina," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41 (Fall 2007): 213-215.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 215. Nelson emphasizes how both the adoption and rejection of architectural features in colonial era Anglican churches convey idea of community identity. The author asserts, “ The conscious rejection of a form grants just as much meaning to that for as does its embrace. . .It is important to recognize here that visual signification of the sacred was not (and is never) absolute but context dependent.” This dissertation will also consider material patterns as cultural expressions in the case of African American religious space.

potential of American sacred space serves as a theoretical starting point for understanding the material aspects of the black church, the haven of the modern Civil Rights Movement. His thesis allows one to conceptually understand how sacred space produced by marginalized communities can serve as fertile ground for social movements and material traditions.<sup>48</sup>

In reconstructing the activities of each congregation in the years directly preceding the occupation of the current structure through at least the first ten years after completion or property purchase, this project will document the spatial and material needs of these religious communities and trace how they met these demands. Clark E. Clifford's 1976 article "'Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870" published in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* uses social history methodologies to explore how revival styles were used to convey prevalent ideologies. This dissertation will probe adoptions, adaptations and new material formulations evident in black religious material culture. Informed by behavioristic concerns of material culture studies, this study will examine how social practice influences and plays out across these sacred spaces.

Each case study will consult and consider the influence of architectural publications concerning ecclesiastical structures in order to contextualize each building and the practice of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's architect, Samuel T.G. Morsell, and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1's architect, George D. Mason.<sup>49</sup> Gwen W. Steege's 1987 essay "*The Book of Plans and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States: A Study in Architectural Patronage*," demonstrates the potential of placing such publications in conversation with the structures as artifacts. Although two white architects designed the churches examined in this study, it is

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Beyer, "Social Forms of Religion and Religions in Contemporary Global Society," *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>49</sup> Gwen W. Steege, "'The Book of Plans' and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States: A Study in Architectural Patronage," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 45, no. 3 (1987): 215-227.



instructive to investigate these architectural actions among African American communities alongside sources that influenced African American engagements with architecture.<sup>50</sup> Additional building manuals considered in this dissertation include, but are not limited to, the General Congregational Convention's *A Book of Plans: Churches and Parsonages* (1854), the Rev. George Bowler's *Chapel and Church Architecture with Designs for Parsonages* (1856), Robert Charles Bates's *The Elementary Principles of Architecture and Building* (1892) and William Wallace Martin's *Manual of Ecclesiastical Architecture* (1898).

This dissertation will probe the architectural and material practices of two African Americans churches in order to identify how sacred, cultural and socioeconomic meaning is inscribed through object and gesture. One interpretive precedent is Angel Nieves's exploration of African American identity as expressed in the design and architecture of a southern industrial school for African American erected during Reconstruction.<sup>51</sup> In his article entitled, "'To erect above the ruined auction-block...institutions of learning': 'race-women,' industrial education, and the artifacts of nation-making in the Jim Crow South," the author states:

This essay...questions traditional historiographic approaches to architectural history (which are typically professionally oriented, white male monographs) by looking more broadly at aspects of African American women's political and social activism that has dramatically transformed the built domain... These educational landscapes are therefore symbolic representations and/or artifacts of the cause for Black liberation, communal self-empowerment and nationalism.

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<sup>50</sup>Dreck Spurlock Wilson," *African American Architects: a Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 99 &183. Considering that it may be the first book written by an African American concerning architecture, this manual may have informed nineteenth century congregations. For example, in 1893, early African American architectural pioneer, Robert Charles Bates, shaped architectural knowledge among African American communities with the publication, *The Elementary Principles of Architecture and Building*. According to the research of Dreck Wilson Scurlock, in 1890, Bates taught the first architectural drawing course at a historically black college or university at Claflin University, predating the teaching of architecture at both Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and Hampton Institute.

<sup>51</sup> Angel Nieves, "'We gave out hearts and live to it': African-American women reformers, industrial education, and the monuments of nation-building in the post-reconstruction South, 1877-1938," (Ph.D. Diss., Cornell University, 2001).

These “Black memory sites” of learning can be seen as much more than simply paeans to uplift ideology, but as a series of commemorations of theories—spatial, gendered and racialized—of nationalism. Their schools were early forms of gendered Black nationalism giving rise to a series of complex strategies and political ideologies centered on race-based institution making.”<sup>52</sup>

Nieves explores the materialization of African American identity as expressed through a dynamic matrix of intersectional identities that shaped the southern landscape. In a similar fashion, African American religious communities influenced the northern urban landscape by engaging in large scale architectural projects. Akin to educational architecture, these religious traditions were maintained and enhanced through subsequent decorative programs, thus establishing a material dialog across generations. These material and visual legacies will be explored in chapters three and five.

This dissertation contrasts two different modes of claiming space: construction and real estate acquisition. In the case of the latter, Stewart Brand’s analysis of the adaptive life of a structure directly informs this study. Brand observes that institutional structures such as churches are slow to adaptation. In the case of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 this is quite true. Most of the adaptations were decorative as opposed to architectural adjustments.<sup>53</sup> Metropolitan AME Church also attests to Brand’s assertion as Metropolitan did not undergo alteration until the 1990s when an unfinished basement was converted to usable space. This dissertation seriously interrogates the idea behind Brand Stewart’s inquiry: “Could different kinds of change be contrasted?”<sup>54</sup> In order to recover and document aesthetic traditions of African American sacred spaces, this dissertation will demonstrate the necessity of comparative analysis in order to discern aesthetic pattern and variation.

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<sup>52</sup> Angel Nieves, "To erect above the ruined auction-block institutions of learning: race-women, industrial education, and the artifacts of nation-making in the Jim Crow South," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 1 (2005): 278.

<sup>53</sup> Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn : What Happens After They're Built* (New York: Viking, 1994) 108.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

I hope to elucidate the various architectural and decorative styles encountered in select churches giving great consideration to one aspect of Zora Neal Hurston's "Characteristics of Negro Expression:" originality. Completed only six years after conducting ethnographic research of Voodoo traditions in New Orleans, Hurston's modern interpretive description of African American artistic expression was first published in Nancy Cunard's collection, *Negro: an Anthology* (1934). Hurston defines originality in the African American context as often involving the "modification of ideas."<sup>55</sup> Citing religion as an area where this originality is apparent, Hurston asserts, "While he [the African American] lives and moves in the midst of a white civilization, everything that he touches is re-interpreted for his own use."<sup>56</sup> This dissertation will examine how these churches reinterpreted architectural and aesthetic style to communicate dynamic notions of African American Protestant identity.

### Material Culture Studies

This interdisciplinary examination is deeply indebted to the analytical frameworks at the core of material culture studies. In the introduction to his edited volume, *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, Robert Blair St. George provides a methodology that investigates the everyday relationship of object and gesture.<sup>57</sup> This paradigm incorporates and highlights the scholarship of Jules Prown. Jules Prown's 1982 essay, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," originally published in *Winterthur Portfolio*, defines this method of inquiry based on the premise that "both architecture and the applied arts, by their use in a wide range of daily activities, especially domestic, are bearers of information about

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<sup>55</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression (1934)," *The New Negro: Readings on Race Representation and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, eds. Henry L. Gates, Jr. and Andrew Jarrett, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 359.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Robert St. George, "Introduction," *Material Life in America, 1600-1800*, ed. by (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 8-9.

numerous, sometimes quite private, reaches of the human experience.”<sup>58</sup> When considering this statement in the context of African Americans’ religious communities of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, sacred spaces are equally capable of serving as indices of culture. This dissertation will employ aspects of the methodology outlined by Prown that features description, deduction and speculation.<sup>59</sup> This last step will allow for the examination of categories in order to analyze patterns and dissonant material articulations.

In an equally influential essay published in 1980 by the *Winterthur Portfolio*, entitled “Style as Evidence,” Prown insists, “style is inescapably culturally expressive, that the formal data embodied in objects are therefore of value as cultural evidence...”<sup>60</sup> Prown establishes a framework for interrogating how particular communities invest multiple meanings in the use of style. In the face of the legacies and realities of socio-economic oppression, networks of black congregations constructed environments that straddled the secular and sacred, private and public, sanctuary and multifunctional. These sites constitute a cultural landscape constructed through acts of religious materiality.<sup>61</sup>

### Art History and Visual Culture

The 2001 anthology, *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, edited by David Morgan and Sally M. Promeay advances the study of African American religious visual traditions. The editors outline an analytical framework in the introduction that provides a way of unpacking the

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<sup>58</sup> Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Material Life in America, 1600-1800*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Material Life in America, 1600-1800*, ed. by Robert St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 23-26.

<sup>60</sup> Prown, “Style as Evidence,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 15 (Autumn, 1980): 197.

<sup>61</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). McDannell describes material Christianity as the everyday practice of Christian affirmation that is often expressed with material or visual aspects.

layers of meaning in sacred space. In theorizing American sacred space, Morgan and Promey write:

We count at least four operations (and there are certainly others) by which images participate significantly in religious practice. First, images are understood to communicate between human and divine realms in an economy of ritualized exchange. Second, they help establish the social basis of communion by consolidating and reinforcing a range of allegiance, large and small. Third, images help to create and organize memory. And fourth, they fuel constructive, synthetic acts of imagination in the kind of meaning making practices that form a basic religious experience.<sup>62</sup>

This passage provides a critical framework to explore not only the visual but the material engagements of faith and space. In a fashion similar to the aforementioned scholars, this dissertation sets out to assess the visual and aesthetic strategies artists employed in creating religious art for African American communities. With an interest in probing overlooked instances of artistic patronage, this study will document dominant iconographies and ideologies that shaped this art commissioned by African American churches.

### **State of the Literature and Influential Precedents**

The scholarly discourse concerning the architectural and aesthetic traditions of the black church can be found across several disciplines. This dissertation will engage the standing scholarship on the black church in architectural history, material culture studies and art history.

#### Architectural History

Despite the dearth of scholarship on African American architectural history, the scholarly contributions of Richard K. Dozier established one of the earliest chronologies of African

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<sup>62</sup> Morgan and Promey, "Introduction," *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1-2.

American building practices.<sup>63</sup> More recently, his research and public lectures on Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (1909) in Birmingham, Alabama, exemplify the type of architectural history this study will engage.<sup>64</sup> Dozier explores the material layers of this sacred space, designed and erected under the supervision of African American architect, Wallace A. Rayfield.<sup>65</sup>

Carroll Van West's essay on African American churches in rural Tennessee included in the edited volume, *We Shall Independent Be: African-American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in America*, demonstrates the architectural description and historical contextualization African American sacred space requires. In her analysis of this environment, West asserts, "The churches surrounding African American institutions, and the location of both within larger white dominated cultural landscape spoke a language of space, one that conveyed faith, certainly, but also community permanence, stability, and the feeling of safe haven."<sup>66</sup> The author characterizes the cultural work of African American churches as engaging in a material dialog with the broader American landscape. Van West recognizes the cultural work these spaces engage by communicating a specific set of ideals.<sup>67</sup> "Upon this Rock" will proceed from the position established in West's essay which analyzes these churches as historic artifacts, enacting cultural work over space and time. This approach aligns with material culture studies' interest in investigating the historical narratives and experiences that are contained in object-based histories.

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<sup>63</sup> Richard K. Dozier, "Black Craftsmen and Architects in History," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 33 (1974): 236-237 and "A Historical Survey: Black Architects and Craftsmen," *Black World* (May 1974):4-14.

<sup>64</sup> Richard K. Dozier and Southern Center for Afro-American Architecture, *The Black Architectural Experience in America* (Tuskegee, AL: Southern Center for Afro-American Architecture, 1980); Dozier, "Rayfield Contact," Email, 9 Jul 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Dowling, "Wallace Augustus Rayfield (1874-1941), Wilson, *African American Architects: a Biographical Dictionary, 1865-194*, 338-340.

<sup>66</sup> Carroll Van West, "Sacred Spaces of Faith, Community, and Resistance: Rural African American Churches in Jim Crow Tennessee," *We Shall Independent Be: African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States*. Angel D. Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander ,eds. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008), 443-444.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 443.

### Material Culture Studies

Robert Blair St. George's collection of essays entitled, *Material Life in America, 1600-1800*, includes information regarding the material and spatial predecessors to the traditions discussed in this dissertation. Dell Upton's "White and Black Landscapes" in this anthology offers important information about the slave landscape in which African American Protestant material traditions emerge. In this influential essay, Upton marshals detailed information about specific iterations of African American religious engagement that help establish a context for late nineteenth and twentieth century Black church architecture.

His first characterization revolves around the African American experience in the slave master's church. Emphasizing the absence of particular barriers associated with Antebellum and Jim Crow society, Upton states, "At church, for instance, there was no definite seating arrangement for those few slaves who did choose to attend or who were permitted to do so. The 'slave gallery' of the nineteenth century was a rarity in the eighteenth...Slaves might sit in or adjacent to their masters' pews or they might share a section at the rear set aside for them."<sup>68</sup> Upton provides the foundations for beginning to understand the enslaved individual's experience in white mainstream Protestant churches. Upton's analysis provides a reference point and historic context toward understanding how mainline Protestant material aesthetics influenced the ancestors of the congregations who erected revival style structures during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Within the last ten years, there has been an upsurge in the production of scholarship interrogating material heritages of Pentecostal denominations such as the Church of God in Christ

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<sup>68</sup> Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes," *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, Clifton Ellis, and Rebecca Ginsburg, eds. (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2010), 366.

(COGIC). In April, 2012, *The Journal of Urban History* published Lauren E. Beaupre's essay, "Saints and the 'Long Civil Rights Movement': Claiming Space in Memphis." The author argues that the COGIC "assert[ed] spatial claims" by "construct[ing] increasing[ly] grandiose churches."<sup>69</sup> This historically black Pentecostal denomination's projects necessitates an analysis of the subject from an urban planning, material history perspective. Beaupre employs a range of material artifacts including archival photography and architecture as historical evidence to advance an understanding of Pentecostal material production.

Historic collections and exhibitions in local and national museums serve to archive African American churches. The Smithsonian Institution collections at the National Museum of African American Heritage and Culture (NMAAHC) and the National Museum American History (NMAH) contain a wide range of artifacts that represent the diversity of African American religious material traditions.<sup>70</sup> The National Museum of American History houses the Scurlock Collection which features at least fifty or more photographs of Washington, D.C. area church interiors and elevations. The NMAAHC collection includes several church pews such as one from Illinois's oldest African Methodist Episcopal Church, Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church.<sup>71</sup> (Figure 1. 3) Historic worship spaces have been recreated in museums around the country.

Another stellar example is the Stax Museum of American Soul Music in Memphis, Tennessee which opened in 2010. The main exhibition, which details the evolution of the Memphis sound which is responsible for nurturing soul music and modern gospel, commences by

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<sup>69</sup> Lauren Beaupre, "Saints and the 'Long Civil Rights Movement': Claiming Space in Memphis," *Journal of Urban History*, (12 Apr 2012): 4.

<sup>70</sup> The concluding chapter will return to considering the impact of the collection of artifacts from African American church at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

<sup>71</sup> The National Museum of African American History and Culture's collection contains object from A.M.E., Baptist, A.M.E. and Evangelical congregations. For example, A.M.E. founder Bishop Richard Allen's money box and a prayer kneeler from First A.M.E. Church of Los Angeles, California.



transporting the visitor to a rural Tennessee church.<sup>72</sup> (Figure 1. 4) This section of the exhibition entitled, “The Gospel Church in the Lives of African Americans,” recreates the interior of Hooper A.M.E. Church, a wooden structure built and furnished by its members.<sup>73</sup> The pews, pulpit furnishings and visual decorations define these types of sanctuaries and influenced my selection of objects to be analyzed across each case study. The prominence of a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* in this space illustrated the integral role art played in creating African American sacred spaces.

A similar historic recreation of sacred space is featured in “Mother” Bethel A.M.E. Church’s denominational museum. (Figure 1. 5) The museum is housed in the basement of the church, adjacent to the tombs of denominational founders, Bishop Richard Allen, his wife Sarah Allen and fellow denominational pioneer, Bishop Morris Brown. Bringing together an early pulpit and pew, this installation also includes a 1916 painting that seems to establish a material trajectory for this early A.M.E. religious community. (Figure 1. 6) This A.M.E. history painting presents a full-length portrait of Bishop Richard Allen and a quarter-length portrait of his wife, Sarah Allen among the early members of “Mother” Bethel Church. The pair is compositionally connected by an implied diagonal line. The founding space is rendered as a dimly lit space. The painter places the makeshift pulpit, comprised of a tree stump and blacksmith anvil, just beyond

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<sup>72</sup> Charles L. Hughes, *Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) 45. Charles L. Hughes offers this definition for the Memphis soul: “‘The Memphis sound,’ the central motif around which southern R&B and soul recording—even those not recorded in Memphis—were promoted and understood in the 1960s and beyond. . . Writers, activists, and fans heralded it as the ‘blackest’ popular music of the era, most expressive of the black experience in the civil rights era. But, at the same time, they claimed the Memphis sound owed its distinctiveness to the interracial group of the musicians who blended the South’s musical traditions. . .”

<sup>73</sup> Wall text, Hooper A.M.E. Church installation, “The Gospel Church in the Lives of African Americans,” Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Memphis, TN.

the light in the foreground. This painting represents the interior of the retrofitted blacksmith shop documented in the Birch and Son lithograph.<sup>74</sup>

### Art History

Landmark art exhibitions of African American art have also illustrated the intrinsic relationship between the visual arts and religion. These exhibitions include the Studio Museum of Harlem's *Myth and Ritual: a Survey of African American Art* (1982), the Anacostia Community Museum's *Locating the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in African American Art* (1999) and more recently, the Museum of Biblical Art's *Ashe to Amen: African Americans and Biblical Imagery* (2013). In the exhibition catalog introduction to *Ashe to Amen: African Americans and Biblical Imagery*, the foremost scholar on the aesthetics of African American Christianity, Leslie King-Hammond asserts:

Visual expressions became more complex as African and African American craftspersons and artists manipulated materials and experimented with imagery that spoke symbolically with encoded meanings. The understanding and interpretation of not just the stories and characters of the Bible, but how to aesthetically translate and transform those *lived* experiences through biblical themes into works of great innovation and imagination is demonstrated in *Ashe to Amen*. Given the reality that this artistry was not acknowledged as important to dominant streams of art-making, other than fulfilling functional or practical needs, the question of how many works and genres have been missed, lost, destroyed, or gone unrecognized must be considered.<sup>75</sup>

In a similar fashion, this dissertation sets out to explore the “encoded meanings” located in the overlooked aesthetics and material fibers of African American religious spaces.

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<sup>74</sup> William Birch and Sons, *The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania color engravings*, (Philadelphia: William Birch, 1800) 27. [http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/798](http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/798) > (accessed: March 15, 2017). According to AME historical accounts, the earliest AME religious space was a retrofitted blacksmith shop that had been moved to Walnut Street in Philadelphia. This space is document across a range of media including painting, illustration and historical diorama.

<sup>75</sup> Leslie King-Hammond. “Introduction,” *Ashe to Amen: African Americans and Biblical Imagery*, Leslie King-Hammond, ed. (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2013), 9.

Kymerly N. Pinder's 1997 essay, "'Our Father, God; Our Brother, Christ; or are we Bastard Kin?': Images of Christ in African American Painting," published in the interdisciplinary journal *African American Review* explores how the tension between race and divinity plays out across the African American art historical canon. By exploring art that features racialized representations of religious subject matter in canonical artworks by Henry Ossawa Tanner, Archibald Motley, Jr., Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, and Romare Bearden, the author puts forth a visual trajectory, documenting African American religious expression.<sup>76</sup>

In 2003, Jennifer Lynn Strychasz completed her dissertation at the University of Maryland, College Park entitled "'Jesus is Black!' Race and Christianity in African American Church Art, 1968-1986." In this dissertation, she carried this line of inquiry further, by investigating black religious art at the height of the Black Arts Movement, but more importantly during the birth and early development of Black Liberation Theology. This extensive study represents the potential advancements in American visual culture studies toward understanding how artistic production reveals political, racial and religious identities and a space historically rooted in material spiritual agency. She outlines a history of religious iconography across the art of Tanner, Allan R. Crite, Richmond Barthé and Ellis Wilson while introducing artists such as Elmo Jones and Walter Edmonds.<sup>77</sup> "Upon This Rock" will extend Strychasz's model, comparing decorative elements alongside architectural characteristics. I will employ similar analytical approaches found in the scholarship of Pinder, Strychasz and other art historians who have documented aesthetic strategies of religious art, while also exploring recurring iconographies specific to these spaces.

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<sup>76</sup> Pinder offers analysis of images such as Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Savior* (1900-5), Archibald Motley, Jr.'s *Mending Socks* (1924), Aaron Douglas's *The Crucifixion* (1927), William H. Johnson's *Jesus and the Three Marys* (1939) and Romare Bearden's *Mary Supporting Christ* (1945).

<sup>77</sup> Strychasz's dissertation introduces compositions including, *Mother & Son (Supplication)* (1939) by Richmond Barthé, *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* (1944) by Allan R. Crite, *The Crucifixion* by Malvin Gray Johnson and Ellis Wilson's religious murals of the 1940s.

Jennifer Lynn Strychasz's postulation on African American religious communities' relationship to racialized images of Christ anchors the interpretative framework of "Upon this Rock." In chapter one of Strychasz's dissertation, she rigorously traces the evolution of religious imagery in African American art, as pursued by artists and commissioned by black religious communities. After presenting a parade of examples of African American religious art, the author concludes:

Additionally, some public and ecclesiastical religious visual culture of the time indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of African Americans to Christianity between the 1920s and the late 1950s...I suggest that much of black religious imagery of the period engaged in a complex negotiation between assimilation into the dominant white Christian framework and the desire to assert an African American identity...The strategies pre-1960 black religious artists employed included an emphasis on African American community and cultural contributions...This emerging insistence that African Americans be represented in Christianity, a form of inclusion with ties both to accommodation and resistance, appeared to be a major theme within pre-1960 black religious art. The interest in communities and in depicting African Americans as a faithful, religious people became increasingly important to visual artists from 1930 to 1960.<sup>78</sup>

This thesis offers a rich assessment of how individuals, congregations and institutions engaged in the various stages of art-making process, producing the variety and diversity evident across the material and visual terrain of "the Black Sacred Cosmos." It is my objective to contribute to the documentation of these spaces, in order to challenge and strengthen the standing discourse concerning African American religious art and architecture.

This dissertation also aims to introduce new examples of American religious art efforts to give visual form to Christ in a variety of media ranging from an extensive stained glass program utilizing a system of symbols to represent Christ and Biblical passages to large scale mural projects featuring black Madonna and Christ figures. Chapters three and five of this dissertation

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<sup>78</sup>Jennifer Lynn Strychasz, "'Jesus is Black!' Race and Christianity in African American Church Art, 1968-1986," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003), 57-59.

will explore how congregations negotiated issues of race as it relates to visual representations of Christ. These individual instances reflect the diversity of approaches American religious communities employed and broaden our knowledge of specific responses to either accepting an Anglo-European representation of Christ or re-imagining Christ as a racialized person of color. By documenting and analyzing this iconography in the context of the African American church, this dissertation sets out to engage in a scholarly discourse previously established by David Morgan, Jennifer Lynn Strychasz, Edward J. Blum, Paul Harvey and more recently, Kymberly Pinder.

Blum and Harvey's 2012 book, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*, extends Morgan's scholarship on the mass popularity of Warner Sallman's Evangelical Christ portraits, by examining the social environment and cultural work of images of white Jesus figures. In their methodological rationale informed by Whiteness Studies, the authors explain the premise of their analysis:

[We seek to]... use white Jesus imagery to explore the varying contours of whiteness, to show how fluid it has been, to reveal how its potency enveloped the sacred and to delineate how his holy whiteness has been used to sanctify racial hierarchies... The differing and evolving physical renderings of white Jesus figures not only bore witness to the flexibility of racial constructions but also helped create the perception that whiteness was sacred and everlasting.<sup>79</sup>

Blum and Harvey open this text by contextualizing the 1963 white supremacist, iconoclastic attack on Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Highlighting an African American tradition of incorporating white Christ figures in religious art, the authors describe the shattered stained glass windows featuring this representation of Christ as a "casualty of race war," alongside the four little girls, Denise McNair, Addie Mae Collins, Carol Robertson and Cynthia Wesley who died from that blast.<sup>80</sup> It is my intention to introduce new examples of African

<sup>79</sup> Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey. "Introduction," *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 7-8.

<sup>80</sup> Blum and Harvey, "Prologue," *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America*, 1.

American religious communities establishing visual traditions that express their relationship to the popularized images of white Jesus. Although each congregation in this dissertation takes a different stance, the range of responses reflects the various positions held by African American congregations across the nation.

In 2016, Kymberly Pinder developed her ideas into the book, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*. Following an ethnographic introduction, Pinder outlines a study of the influence of Black Liberation Theology on religious visual practice among African American churches and artists from 1904 to the present era.<sup>81</sup> She identifies a representational style that unites her case studies: empathetic realism.<sup>82</sup> Influenced by architect and theorist Craig L. Wilkins, the author describes the four churches in her study as “celebratory heterotopias” anchored by religious iconography.<sup>83</sup> Pinder’s scholarship offers the most comprehensive history of Black Christ imagery in African American painting. Her account features an art history of African American Chicago artists exploring religious iconography including, William E. Scott (1884-1864), Frederick D. Jones (1914-2004), Joseph Evans, Jr. (1908- 1989), and Richard Hunt (1935-). This dissertation will also explore African American art history from local and regional perspectives by investigating artists who are omitted from familiar art historical narratives. Akin

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<sup>81</sup> Kymberly Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016). Pinder’s case studies examine art at Pilgrim Baptist Church, First Church of Deliverance, Trinity United Church of Christ and several Catholic churches. Although Black Liberation Theology did not emerge formally in writing until the 1960, proponents of Black Liberation Theology augmented late nineteenth century thinkers such as Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the notion of God is of Negro origin.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 18. Considering the words of artists who worked in this style such as African American muralist William Walker, Pinder defined this style as eliciting the “ability to empower viewers” toward a more profound sense of humanity.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 15; Craig L. Wilkins, *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture, and Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Craig L. Wilkinson defines “celebratory heterotopias” as “spatial practices that challenge the very limitations and boundaries of crisis/deviant definitions. The relations that construct the celebratory contest constantly work and rework the very author of these particular categorizations, in the process appropriating and palimpsestically altering dominant spatial understanding.”

to Pinder, this analysis aims to advance the historical record of church congregations as art patrons.

Advancing this body of scholarship that expands African American religious art, it is my intention to broaden our understanding of African American art by introducing new artist such as painters Wallace X. Conway, Jr., active in Washington, D.C. during the late 1950s and Glanton V. Dowdell, artist-activist painting in Detroit during the late 1960s. Over generations, these congregations have sustained and enhanced the initial material investments of their ancestors' selection of aesthetic style. One example of this is the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, a Colonial Revival structure that conceals Black Madonna decorative aesthetics. It is my intention to trace these architectural and visual traditions in order to supplement the standing notion of black church aesthetics.

### **Overview of Chapters**

This dissertation is comprised of an introductory chapter, two case studies (across two chapters each) and a concluding chapter. The second chapter will explore Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, the nation's oldest independent African American denomination's Gothic Revival cathedral, erected within blocks of the White House from 1881 to 1886. Considered a community and an architectural example of racial progress, Metropolitan was photographically included by Du Bois in his Negro Exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition.<sup>84</sup> This chapter will interrogate how this congregation engaged notions of nineteenth century revival architectural design and Victorian social culture to create sacred and secular space. Chapter two will trace the evolution of the congregation and the construction and adornment of the current edifice.

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<sup>84</sup>Horace G. Dawson, Jr. "Introduction" "Briefing Book Respecting Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C.; prepared for the Reverence Dr. Louis –Charles Harvey, Pastor,"(1996) Non-published from Archival Material from Private Collection of Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey, 1-2.

Chapter three aims to interrogate the material and visual traditions cultivated at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Scurlock Studio photographs housed at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History document Metropolitan during the early twentieth century and will provide evidence of the space and material history. Metropolitan's visual heritage features a collection of photographic portraits of the denomination's bishops that mirrors a collection in "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. (Philadelphia, PA).<sup>85</sup> In 1957, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church advanced their artistic aims by commissioning an eighteen foot mural of a white Christ painted by African American artist and museum administrator, Wallace X. Conway Jr., which has since been removed.

The second case study will examine Detroit's Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as an example of a tradition of repurposing space as well as architectural and artistic vocabularies. The Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr., one of the earliest figures to coin the term Black Theology, redefined the former Central Congregational by renaming the church The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 in final month of 1969.<sup>86</sup> In 1957, Central Congregational Church purchased Pilgrim-Brewster Congregational Church. This structure was designed in 1925 by one of Detroit's influential architects, George D. Mason. The fourth chapter of this dissertation will outline the construction history and life of the church at the structure's purchase. Over the next ten years, this Colonial Revival structure took on radical meaning through the social life of the church as expressed in action as well as material and visual expressions. This historical analysis will record the gradual evolution from the Black Christian Nationalist Movement to what is now known as the Pan

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<sup>85</sup> Dennis Dickerson, "Our History," A.M.E. Church official website, < <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>> (Accessed: September 1, 2016). The founding church of African Methodism, "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. Church was founded in 1794 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Allen successfully legally protested by suing the state in 1807 and 1815.

<sup>86</sup> "Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church: Chronology,(2004)," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24, 16-22, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. According to the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church Chronology, the church's name was not official changed until 1970.



Africanist Orthodox Christian Church (PAOCC).<sup>87</sup> This shift was also expressed through material and visual alterations that symbolized ideological and theological perspectives.

Chapter five will present one of the earliest material and visual histories of the radical iconography initiated and promoted by the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. Almost ten years after the purchase of the Colonial Revival temple-front structure, the congregation commissioned Glanton V. Dowdell to paint a mural of a black Madonna and Christ. This mural replaced a full-length stained-glass window portrait of American Colonial icon, William Bradford, governor of the Plymouth Colony.<sup>88</sup> This decorative centerpiece featuring Bradford conveyed associative meanings, alluding to the oppression American colonial imperialism inflicted on the native populations. Acknowledging the intrinsic relationship of aesthetics and spirituality in the African American experience, the church hosted the First Annual Black Arts Conference in Detroit in 1966. The following year, the church celebrated the completion of eighteen by nine foot oil on canvas mural featuring a black Madonna swaddling a black infant Christ.

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, this religious community grew into a national network that spanned the eastern United States and carried with it a tradition of art patronage, incorporating mural painting into all sanctuary decorative plans. Chapter five will investigate the material strategies this religious community employed in endowing a Colonial Revival mainline

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<sup>87</sup> Jawanza Eric Clark, “The Dead are not Dead”: A Constructive, African-centered Theological Anthropology” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2008). The PAOCC describes itself as a “socially conscious denomination...committed to transforming the spiritual emptiness, economic powerlessness and social disorganization that plagues the Black community.”

<sup>88</sup> William Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation* (1898), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); George F. Willison, *The Pilgrim Reader; The Story of the Pilgrims As Told by Themselves & Their Contemporaries, Friendly & Unfriendly*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953. William Bradford (1590-1657) was a member of the separatist group left England and moved to Holland in 1608. In 1620, he was a part of this group immigrated to the North America with the Pilgrims. In addition to being an initial signer of the Mayflower Compact, Bradford served as governor of Plymouth Colony for over thirty years. The Congregational Church became the established church of the Massachusetts Bay colony.

Protestant space with Black Theology.<sup>89</sup> It will also consider how the development of Black Liberation Theology, the Black Arts Movement and regional labor movements influenced the architectural and material evolution of Shrine, #1.<sup>90</sup>

The concluding chapter will consider the critical questions concerning space and aesthetics posed by Black Feminist scholars including bell hooks and Patricia Hill-Collins. These women challenge singular interpretations of African American culture and posit analytical perspectives that reclaim new art histories. This chapter will also reflect on methodological variables and benefits of the visually and architectural documenting and interpreting African American sacred spaces.

Chapter six will conclude by outlining some of the defining iconographies of Black Protestantism. The material and visual legacies of African American churches have influenced a wide range of African American artists. The impact of this institution resulted in a body of art that turned to the African American church as art subject.<sup>91</sup> As this dissertation will demonstrate,

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<sup>89</sup> Black Liberation Theology was a movement that emerged out of the 1960s that promoted a critical reassessment of American theology in African American spaces. Black Liberation Theology confronted the histories of racial oppression in American Christianity. For more on Black Liberation Theology see the following sources: Rufus Burrow, *James H. Cone and Black Liberation Theology* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 1994); James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Power, Black People and Theological Renewal," *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of Religious History of African American* (1973), (New York: Orbis Books, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> Bracey, Sanchez and Smethurst, eds. "Editors' Introduction, *SOS—Calling All Black People*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014) 1. Bracey, Sanchez and Smethurst define the Black Arts Movement with these words: "BAM [the Black Arts Movement] encompassed a wide range of ideological and aesthetic stances. Nonetheless, like the Black Power Movement, all strains of BAM were generally united by a belief in the need for personal and social transformation of African Americans to determine their own political and cultural destiny and by a sense that the movement was part of an international struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism and racism."

<sup>91</sup> Leslie King-Hammond, "From Ashe to Amen: Biblical Imagery and the African American Experience," (Keynote speech, History, Identity and Faith: Representations of Christianity in Modern and Contemporary African American Art, The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, March 23, 2012). For instance, consider this list of artworks as constituting an iconography of African American church sanctuary interiors: James Van Der Zee's photograph *The Funeral of Blanche Powell* (1926), Archibald Motley's oil painting *Tongues (Holy Rollers)* (1929), *Easter Shout!* (1981) by Houston Conwill, Jacob

African American churches contain art histories of unrecognized artist, working on local and regional levels. For instance, an iconographic inquiry surrounding patterns of both black and white Christ murals in African American churches reveals a rich diasporic art practice. This focused localized examination reclaims instances of artistic agency beyond the documented art historical canon. The final chapter of this dissertation will outline critical methodological and interpretive inquiries that emerge from this project.

Moving beyond the black church as merely a passive setting, this dissertation will record, interpret and finally compare religious architectural history as well as material and visual culture. This art represents the black church as a constellation of sites that vary stylistically but are united in a local shared sense of religion and a dedication to empowering African American culture.

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Lawrence's 1990 *Genesis Series, A Laying-out in Philadelphia* by Reginald Gammon, Benny Andrews's *Revival Series* (1995), Marilyn Nance's photograph  *Holding Hands in Church (Brooklyn, NY)*(1986) and more recently, Dawoud Bey's *The Birmingham Project* (2013). These artwork reference the expansive nature of the material, design and stylistic traditions of a space synonymous with African American communal agency.



Figure 1.1. Samuel T.G. Morsell, architect, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C., erected 1881-1886, Library of Congress.

W.E.B. Du Bois included this photograph in his *Negro Exhibit* at the 1900 Paris Exposition. This photographic artifact demonstrates the material and socio-political prominence of this A.M.E. congregation as well as the denomination at large.



Figure 1.2. George D. Mason, architect, Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, (formerly Pilgrim-Brewster Congregational Church), Detroit, Michigan, 1925, photograph of taken by author.

In 1957, Central Congregational Church (later renamed the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1) purchased this structure. By the late 1960s, the site was transformed into a headquarters for Black Nationalism. As a testament to the positive social function of the congregation, the site remained unscathed during the 1967 riots.



Figure 1.3. Unidentified artisan, Original Pew from Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church (Chicago, IL), 1891, wood, 47 x 51 x 29 inches, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Heritage and Culture, Washington, D.C., Gift of Quinn Chapel, A.M.E. Church, (Accessed September 3, 2016).

This pew exemplifies how American collecting institutions are recording the material history of the African American church. In addition, it illustrates how the congregations are shaping their history by serving as donors.



Figure 1.4. Museum installation of Hooper A.M.E. Church, Stax Records Museum, Memphis, TN, 2010, photograph taken by author.

This museum installation recreates an A.M.E. church in the south to convey the spatial, material and visual elements that were consistent in the region and the denomination. In this instance, the black church is historicized as the setting that birthed gospel music, a foundational element of soul, rhythm and blue as well as funk music of the 1960s and 1970s.



Figure 1.5. Recreation of first formal pulpit from “Mother” Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia, n.d., Museum of “Mother” Bethel A.M.E. Church, photograph taken by the author, August, 2014.

This is a recreation of an early A.M.E. worship space that is housed in the Museum of “Mother” Bethel A.M.E. Church. The configuration of the pulpit, pew and chairs are juxtaposed by an artistic rendering of the original “Mother” Bethel Church, housed in a retrofitted Blacksmith shop. This contrast emphasized the role visual and material artifacts play in institutional memory.





Figure 1. 6. Unidentified artist, *Title Not Given* (painting representing the interior of the first 'Mother' Bethel A.M.E. Church), 1914, oil on canvas, Collection of 'Mother' Bethel A.M.E. Church Museum, Philadelphia, PA., photograph taken by author, August, 2014.

This painting A.M.E. history painting is centered on the full-length portrait of Bishop Richard Allen and a quarter-length portrait of his wife, Sarah Allen. The pair is compositionally connected by an implied diagonal line. The founding space is rendered as a dimly lit space. The painter places the makeshift pulpit, comprised of a tree stump and blacksmith anvil, just beyond the light in the foreground.

**CHAPTER 2: CONSIDERING THE ARCHITECTURAL STRIVINGS OF CLASSICAL  
BLACK NATIONALISM: CONSTRUCTING THE CATHEDRAL OF AFRICAN  
METHODISM, METROPOLITAN AME CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

On January 25, 1900, the *Christian Recorder*, the denominational organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), published a correspondence announcing the inclusion of an “American Negro” exhibit in the Paris Exposition of 1900. In a letter addressed to the Paris Exposition administrative committee, Thomas J. Calloway, who signs himself “Special Agent on Negro Education,” provides a justification for this landmark representation of African American identity while outlining the proposed contents. With regard to the “value of the exhibit,” the author asserts: “... the American Negro owes it to himself to show his moral, intellectual and material progress to correct erroneous ideas which may have gained currency...”<sup>1</sup> Calloway, a Washington, D.C. resident and government employee, goes on to outline the featured categories of this exhibit, such as “Churches, to include photographs and statistical charts, etc.,” and “Museum and Art, to include collections of musical compositions, photographs, paintings, statuettes, etc....”<sup>2</sup> This description, which served as an advertisement and a call for materials, foreshadowed the manner in which Calloway and his Fisk University classmate, W.E.B. Du Bois, would use photography and architecture to demonstrate the African American racial progress.

Although previous studies by Shawn Michelle Smith, Rebecka Ruthledge Fisher and Deborah Willis have explored Du Bois’ use of photography to further his narrative of African American progress, little attention has been given to the five photographs of urban ecclesiastical structures included in the exhibition: Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and African Methodist

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas J. Calloway, “United States Commissions: To the Paris Exposition of 1900,” *Christian Recorder*, 25 Jan 1900, in African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Episcopal churches.<sup>3</sup> Du Bois and his collaborator, Thomas J. Calloway, selected Washington, D.C., the African-American mecca at the turn of the twentieth century, as an influential urban environment that attested to the material efforts of African American life.<sup>4</sup> Fisher suggests that one of the major strengths of the Negro Exhibit in Paris lies in Du Bois's decision to privilege cultural artifacts. She writes, "The artifacts were, Du Bois contends, of African American people's own making, thus providing proof of their noetic viability, their collective intellectual and social progress."<sup>5</sup> While each church in this exhibit offers a rich case study for examining the material evolution at the turn of the century, this chapter will examine the African Methodist Episcopal church, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church as an example of economic and cultural agency. (Figure 2.1) Since its completion in 1886, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church has served as an architectural and material statement expressing the history of the denomination and the congregation's symbolic position as a spiritual, intellectual and political center to local and national communities. Redefining and in some cases reinterpreting Western Christian aesthetic vocabularies with the activities this structure would host, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church represents an instance of African American communities using popular artistic styles in an associative manner to articulate the ability and potential of African Americans.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on photography in the "Negro Exhibit" at the 1900 Paris Exposition see Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Looking at One's Self through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review*, Vol.34,(Winter 2000): 581-599.; Deborah Willis and David Levering Lewis, *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. Du Bois and African-American Portraits of Progress*, (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 2003); Rebecka Ruthledge Fisher "Cultural Artifacts and the Narrative of History: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Exhibition of Culture at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle" *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 51 (Winter 2005): 714-774. The identifiable church included in Du Bois's exhibit were the first home of St. Augustine's Catholic Church and Vermont Avenue Baptist Church.

<sup>4</sup> Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), 85.

<sup>5</sup> Fisher, "Cultural Artifacts and the Narrative of History: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Exhibition of Culture at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle," *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (Winter 2005), 715.

With the intention of communicating monumental mass, the frontal photograph of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church included in the “American Negro” exhibit is defined by the stark contrast between the light and dark tones of the Gothic Revival structure and emphasizes the delicate line of the leafless tree in the foreground. The legibility of the structure’s imposing stature communicates the social strength of a national denomination. As reported in *Negro Church*, by 1900, the A.M.E. denomination consisted of 663,746 members, across 5,630 churches valued at \$8,718,456.<sup>6</sup> Du Bois’s intimate knowledge of the socio-cultural and economic primacy of the “black church” alongside Thomas J. Calloway’s experience as an engaged participant in Washington, D.C.’s African American middle class community may have informed the selection of this popular church as an example of racial advancement.<sup>7</sup> As late as 1903, Du Bois regarded the A.M.E. denomination as “the greatest voluntary organization of Negroes in the world.”<sup>8</sup> In the context of the “American Negro” exhibit, Metropolitan’s photograph transforms this impressive structure into a symbol of African American spiritual, theological, economic, cultural and architectural self-determination and progress.

This chapter sets out to examine the layers of cultural history within the walls of this church that is often referred to as the denominational national church or more commonly the “Cathedral of African Methodism.”<sup>9</sup> Employing a similar analytical object-based framework as Louis P. Nelson’s *American Sanctuary*, this historical account of Metropolitan will analyze this

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<sup>6</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The African Methodists,” *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, Alton Pollard, ed.(Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 166.

<sup>7</sup> It is also important to note that Du Bois was employed at an A.M.E. educational institution, Wilberforce University, as Classics Professor, from summer 1894 to May 1896. In fact, Du Bois arrived almost nine months after University President, Bishop Daniel Payne died as cited in David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, (New York: Henry Hold & Company, 1993), 150-151, 178.

<sup>8</sup> Du Bois, *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, 162.

<sup>9</sup> Metropolitan AME Church Website, < <http://www.metropolitanamec.org>>, (accessed: April 14, 2012).

cultural repository as the result of the ambition of several coalitions, including the bishops of the A.M.E. Church and the local congregation in the northwestern quadrant of Washington, D.C.<sup>10</sup> This study will commence by defining Classical Black Nationalism and providing a brief consideration of the architectural traditions and lived histories of Metropolitan's forefather institutions, Israel A.M.E. Church and Union Bethel A.M.E. Church. The examination will move to contextualize Metropolitan's construction by analyzing local Gothic Revival precedents as well as building trends among African Americans religious communities. This case study will proceed by interrogating the structure alongside personal reflections found in archival holdings and institutional positions documented in the widely circulated A.M.E. periodical, the *Christian Recorder*.

A series of questions will be posed and answered in this chapter. How did the A.M.E. denomination employ Gothic Revival vocabularies and was their intended meaning legible? How did the design of interior space reflect the multifaceted uses of space? What evidence exists of the congregation's understanding of sacred space? Grounding this case study in secondary scholarship on American religious architectural history and Black church historical studies, I seek to offer an analysis of the African American use of Gothic Revival stylistic vocabularies. Architectural historians led by Jean H. Kilde and Phoebe Staton have documented the ways in which mainstream Protestant denominations employed Gothic Revival styles to articulate socioeconomic or political capital. In her book *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*, Kilde discusses the intention and cultural meaning behind Gothic Revival, stating:

Gothic Revival buildings...were intended to attract congregants by appealing to these new aesthetic and formalistic interests of this growing middle class...In this

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<sup>10</sup> Louis P. Nelson, ed. "Introduction," *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Spaces*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3.

way, aesthetic and social motivations intertwined as churches competed for congregants in the religious marketplace. For Protestants, then, historicism provided a means of addressing concerns about Christian unity and the desire to attract and retain members.<sup>11</sup>

This case study will reveal that the minds behind Metropolitan A.M.E. Church were aware of popular architectural discourse and aimed to situate Metropolitan and the A.M.E. denomination prominently in the nation's religious landscape. While this historical interpretation offers one perspective on the layers of cultural meaning in this Gothic Revival structure, it is important to consider the social life of the congregation that animated the church.

### **Classical Black Nationalism and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church**

The African American church has long been a headquarters from which community leaders have espoused iterations of radical thought intended to advance the race. One example of this type of African American ideology that may have framed Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's cultural aesthetics is Classical Black Nationalism. Classical Black Nationalism is a body of thought developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century among African American leaders who sought to practice self-determination. Consistently, since the 1960s, scholars such as E.U. Essien-Udom, Sterling Stuckey and Wilson J. Moses have documented the emergence of this perspective.<sup>12</sup> In his 1996 anthology of essential primary sources that shaped this brand of Black Nationalism, Moses outlines major tenets of this school of thought:

Classical black nationalism, which reached its fullest expression in the years from 1850 to 1925, may be defined as the efforts of African Americans to create a sovereign nation-state and formulate an ideological basis for a concept of a

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<sup>11</sup> Jeanne H. Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166.

<sup>12</sup> Essien Udosen, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America*, (New York: Dell, 1964); Sterling Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972); Wilson J. Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: From American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*, (New York: New York University press, 1996).

national culture...The major proponents of classical black nationalism in the nineteenth century invariably believed that the hand of God directed their movement. Their religious beliefs led to a black nationalist conception of history in which Divine providence would guide the national destiny to an early fulfillment...Classical black nationalism may seem mystical by the standards of modern secular society, but to its adherents it provided a means of preserving shreds of dignity and self-respect in the face of the almost universal military, technological, and economic domination by whites over blacks...In addition to their religious historicism, nineteenth-century black nationalists frequently demonstrated an interest in developing a distinctive tradition in art, architecture, music and letters. Such concerns are usually grouped under the rubric of “cultural nationalism,” but classical black nationalists did not employ the term “cultural nationalism,” which was not coined until the twentieth century. Ironically, the cultural ideals of nineteenth century black nationalists usually resembled those of upper-class Europeans and white Americans, rather than those of native African or African American masses. Classical black nationalists were quick to claim ancestral connection with Egypt and Ethiopia...Black cultural nationalism of the classical period must, therefore, be carefully distinguished from that of the late twentieth century. The nationalism of Alexander Crummell and Marcus Garvey was situated in a “high culture” aesthetic, which admired symbols of imperial power, military might and aristocratic refinement.<sup>13</sup>

In many ways, the demonstration of bourgeois Victorian behaviors and styles attested to the humanity, civility and self-determination of the African American community.

Several of the prominent voices in the first phase of classical black nationalism, 1850-1862, spoke at Metropolitan or had ties with the A.M.E. denomination. While Frederick Douglass and Bishop Daniel Payne were closely affiliated with Metropolitan Church, two leaders in this movement, Edward W. Blyden and Alexander Crummell, delivered addresses at the church at the invitation of Bethel Literary and Historical Society.<sup>14</sup> Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, who Wilson Moses names “a true manifestation of nationalism,” compelled the denomination to consider

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<sup>13</sup> Moses, “Introduction,” *Classical Black Nationalism: From American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Blyden (1832-1912) is recognized as one of the pioneers of the Pan Africanist philosophy. He was a Christian minister who was known for his mission work in west African during the nineteenth century. Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) was an Episcopal minister who forged Panafrikan connections across the Atlantic Ocean as a missionary in Liberia. After spending sixteen years in Liberia, he settled in Washington, DC where he served on faculty at Howard University and rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal. Crummell was fixture in the city’s African American intellectual community as evidenced in his role in founding the American Negro Academy one year before his death. Crummell and Blyden were allied and acquaintances.

more radical positions, such as the assertion that “God is a Negro.”<sup>15</sup> What becomes evident across this case study is that while Metropolitan was often a space to exchange ideas concerning the African American condition, the material and visual history complicates the congregation’s relationship with these radical ideas. In fact, the historical narrative contains the same irony Moses referred to as the use of “aristocratic refinement” to articulate racial advancement and cultural unity.

Informed by notions of self-determination at the core of Classical Black Nationalism, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church is an example of architecture commissioned by and for African Americans. Enlisting the services of Samuel T.G. Morsell, a prominent white Methodist Episcopal architect, the denomination and congregation made an affirmative statement concerning their economic and cultural abilities with the erection of the church.<sup>16</sup> It is also important to note that Metropolitan Church represents a tradition of consistent architectural activity across African American communities in Washington, D.C. as well as the A.M.E. denomination nationwide. Metropolitan A.M.E. Church will be analyzed as the result of a generational material dialog, across the generations of congregants that maintained the historic edifice. Over time, the structure has undergone renovations that improved the church’s ability to serve the community.

During the first thirty years of its existence, the tenor of Metropolitan’s life, be it operatic performance or oratorical address, was deeply rooted in self-determination. Historian Albert G. Miller offers a succinct definition of this ideology, central to A.M.E. churches across the nation in

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<sup>15</sup> Wilson, 19.

<sup>16</sup> During the late nineteenth century, African American architect, Calvin Thomas Stowe Brent had a local reputation, completing domestic and ecclesiastical projects. After apprenticing at the architectural firm, Plowman and Weightman in NW, Washington, D.C., Brent’s earliest church is listed as St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, a Gothic Revival structure, completed 1876. Nancy Schwartz, “Calvin Thomas Stowe Brent,” *African American Architects: a biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*, Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57-58.



his biographical analysis of a former pastor of Metropolitan, the Rev. Theophilus G. Steward: “Self-determination was the foundation for both ideologies [black nationalism and assimilation]: it could be used as a tool to gain the end of either a nationalist separation from American society or an assimilationist inclusion in American society.”<sup>17</sup> Metropolitan’s edifice should be understood in the context of African-American self-determination, as proponents of this philosophy such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and Fannie Jackson Coppin, often espoused this rhetoric from the pulpit of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. All vested parties shared a commitment to building a structure that would commemorate a historic moment in the nation’s capital, thus inaugurating a material and visual tradition.<sup>18</sup>

### **Metropolitan’s Material Forbearers: Israel A.M.E. Church & Union Bethel A.M.E. Church**

The congregation that came to be named Metropolitan A.M.E. Church emerged from two A.M.E. congregations: Israel Bethel (1820) and Union Bethel (1838). By the 1840s, Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church was established by an African American congregation located in the shadow of the Capitol, on South Capitol street. Union Bethel A.M.E. Church, an offspring congregation from Israel A.M.E. Church, was located in the northwestern quadrant of the city, on M Street, in the community surrounding the Executive Mansion. As the “mother” church of the denomination in the nation’s capital, Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church established a rich tradition of spiritual and cultural advancement. After Israel Bethel elected to resign from the A.M.E. church in the 1870s over issues of church property ownership, Union Bethel A.M.E. Church, a congregation of

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<sup>17</sup> Albert G. Miller, *Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology, and the Making of African American Civil Society*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), xx-xxi. The Rev. Theophilus Steward (1843-1924) was an AME minister who went on to be one of the earliest African American chaplains in the U.S. Army. He also served as Metropolitan AME Church pastor during the time of the church’s dedication in 1886.

<sup>18</sup> Today’s legacy has far surpassed Handy and Simms’s prediction of Metropolitan serving as a refuge for African American politicians, as photographs of the Forty-Fourth president of the United States of America, President Barack H. Obama represent a seminal moment in this congregation’s visual legacy.

comparable social standing, realized the denominational goal of erecting a Gothic Revival national church. Each congregation contributed to an aspect of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's historic stature in city's religious landscape. Both churches served as a multifunctional community site that facilitated social, political and economic development. Their historical narratives share the distinction of being pastored by denominational leaders who would go on to be bishops. Both congregations materially invested in the sacred space through a rich gifting tradition. Israel Church and Union Bethel were homes to individuals concerned with communicating self-determination through cultural and aesthetic production.

The formation of the A.M.E. denomination united a network of African American congregations founded out of protesting segregation and inferior treatment in predominantly white churches. This local instance of objection reflects a larger trend initiated by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and the African American congregants who protested similar treatment at St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia.<sup>19</sup> Richard Allen's recollection of denominational history as recapitulated in Du Bois and Atlanta University's *Negro Church* recalls these central incidents of 1787 as follows:

We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below not knowing any better...and just as we got to the seats, the elder said: "Let us pray." We had not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and loud talking. I raised my head and saw one of the trustees—H.M.—having hold of Absalom Jones, pulling him up off his knees and saying, "You must get up, you must not kneel here." Mr. Jones replied, "Wait until prayer is over and I will get up and trouble you no more." With that he beckoned to one of the other

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<sup>19</sup>For more information on the protest of peoples of African descent at St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, see the following sources: Bishop Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*, (Philadelphia: Martin & Bowen Printers, 1833); Bishop Daniel Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Rev. C.S. Smith, ed. (Nashville: The AME Sunday School Union, 1891); Richard R. Wright, "Chronology of African Methodism," *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. , 1916); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Julius Bailey, *Race Patriotism Protest and Print Culture in the A.M.E. Church*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012).

trustees—Mr. L.S.—to come to his assistance. He came and went to William White to pull him up. By this time the prayer was over and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued by us in the church. This raised a great excitement and inquiry among the citizens, insomuch that I believe they were ashamed of their conduct. But my dear Lord was with us and we were filled with fresh vigor to get a house erected to worship God in.<sup>20</sup>

This exodus, led by two men who paid for their freedom, resulted in to the formation of the Free African Society in 1787, one of the earliest benevolent societies for African Americans in the nation. As an endorsement of Methodism, the A.M.E. denomination was founded in 1816, after several congregations came together at Bethel A.M.E. Church (Philadelphia).<sup>21</sup> As African American religious community birthed out of protest, Israel Bethel Church in Washington, D.C. emerged as one of several churches that share similar circumstances akin to Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia.

#### Israel Church, Washington D.C.'s Oldest A.M.E. Congregation

In 1820, African American congregants in Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal church protested segregated seating by withdrawing. This religious community would subsequently found Israel Bethel AME Church.<sup>22</sup> The most recent history of Richard Allen and the genesis of A.M.E. church in Philadelphia, authored by Richard S. Newman, emphasizes Allen's role in crafting religious space. Suggesting Allen even supervised the hauling of the retrofitted Blacksmith shop to the Walnut Street site, Newman notes that "Allen crafted a pulpit, arranged pews, and whitewashed the walls of his new church."<sup>23</sup> Elements of this material tradition recur in the early development of the denomination in Washington, D.C. Almost thirty years prior to the emergence of Israel Church, Washington, D.C.'s first A.M.E. church, Bishop Allen and the

<sup>20</sup> Dubois, *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, 163.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Metropolitan AME Church. *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 14 & 71.

Free African Society established a sphere of influence characterized by Methodist liturgical expression, moral piety and self-determination.

By the 1820s, the A.M.E. denomination established connectional conferences in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore while also growing substantial congregations in Cincinnati, Chicago and border slave states such as Maryland and Kentucky.<sup>24</sup> Situating Metropolitan AME Church in the nationwide trend of protesting unequal treatment, African American historian and congregant Charles H. Wesley states the following in a twentieth century church history:

The Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church was an outgrowth of the dissatisfaction which occurred in Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church (white) on Fourth Street, near Virginia Avenue, Northeast, about 1820, and the development of separate congregations of Negro Methodists in the District of Columbia. One separation of the colored members of Ebenezer Congregation led to the organization of Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1821.<sup>25</sup>

In the years following their separation, the growing religious community “worshipped in Basil Sim’s Rope-Walk on First Street, near Pennsylvania Avenue and subsequently in Reverend Mr. Wheat’s School House on Capitol Hill near Virginia Avenue.”<sup>26</sup> Similar to the tradition of Bishop Richard Allen in Philadelphia who demonstrated the potential for spatial and spiritual conversion in the retrofitted Blacksmith shop, the pioneers of this congregation institutionally grounded their activities in the African American community, as they moved from a commercial setting to momentarily transforming educational space into sacred space.

In 1822, after petitioning the Baltimore Conference for admission, Israel Bethel became the capital’s first A.M.E. church.<sup>27</sup> From its inception, Israel Bethel, often referred to as Israel

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<sup>24</sup> African Methodist Episcopal Church. “Our History,” < <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>> (accessed: April 30,2012).

<sup>25</sup> Charles H. Wesley, “A Century of African Methodism at Metropolitan, 1838-1938,”1, Simms Family Papers, 2-44, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Metropolitan AME Church. *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church*(Booklet), 3.

Church in denominational literature, recognized the significance and impact of a physical architectural presence in the federal city. Six years after being admitted into the A.M.E. Church, the congregation purchased First Presbyterian Church located at the foot of Capitol Hill.<sup>28</sup>

Presbyterian denominational history briefly mentions the location of this structure that later housed Israel Church, stating:

With contributions from James Madison and James Monroe, among others, a frame structure was erected. This “Little White Church under the Hill” was located on John Marshall Place (between C and D Streets) on the south slope of Capitol Hill where the Rayburn Building, office of the U.S. House of Representatives, now stands. The first service was held on June 20, 1812. When the British burned the Capitol in August 1814, the church was spared despite its proximity.<sup>29</sup>

In this building Israel Bethel Church gained its prestige and socio-political stature. According to Charles H. Wesley “during the administration of Andrew Jackson,” Israel Church hosted the first “Negro Conference,” which “caused a sensation and gave the church and the denomination a standing surpassing that of all other Negro churches in the communities.”<sup>30</sup> In the years preceding and during the Civil War, the Rev. Henry McNeal Turner served as pastor, recruiting Union troops, while overseeing public abolitionist lectures.<sup>31</sup> These early accounts illustrate the role Israel Bethel Church played as an African American center.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> National Presbyterian Church, “The History of the National Presbyterian Church,” 1, <<http://nationalpres.org/sites/default/files/HistoryofTheNationalPresbyterianChurch.pdf>> (accessed: April 3, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> John Wesley Cromwell, “The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia,” *The Journal of Negro History* 7, (January 1922), 69, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cromwell/menu.html>> (accessed: March 20, 2014). “The Negro Church Conference” would have convened at some point between 1829-1837.

<sup>31</sup> Metropolitan AME Church. *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church*(Booklet), 3.

<sup>32</sup> In addition to pioneering intellectual traditions, Israel Church also pioneered citywide social relief efforts. Throughout the 1860s, Israel Church held a prominent position in the communities of African American church addressing the needs of African Americans during the Civil War ensued. For instance, in 1862, the *Christian Recorder* chronicled how Israel A.M.E. Church was one of the religious communities across Washington, D.C. offering the formerly enslaved people, referred to as contraband, Thanksgiving gifts. The *Christian Recorder* published a detailed description of the religious landscape in which the city’s

While no photographs of this structure have been located, two reports on the social activities housed in the space, indicate the designation of space outside of an elevated sanctuary. The *Christian Recorder* highlighted the efforts of “a committee of women” that hosted “a series of festivals” in a space described as the “ladies hall at the rear of the church.”<sup>33</sup> The allocation of this hall reflects not only the defining role gender played in determining space but also the catalytic role women have historically played in African American churches.<sup>34</sup> The following year, Israel Church was acknowledged in the *Christian Recorder* for hosting a meeting of the African Civilization Society in the “lecture room of Israel Church (South Capitol St.)”<sup>35</sup> The basement was also used by a variety of community organizations to hold fundraising fairs and periodic meetings.<sup>36</sup> Also acting as an educational site, George Bell and Enoch Ambush ran a school for African American children in the basement until they was able to secure a building.<sup>37</sup> Israel Church, a white structure with at least a sanctuary, lecture and ladies’ hall and a functional basement, evolved into an African Methodist site where advocates for African American advancement were frequent visitors.

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first A.M.E. church was an active trailblazing participant. First, it offers a list of Israel contemporaries. This list includes Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church (founded 1936), Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church (founded 1841), and an outgrowth of Israel Church, Union Bethel Church. The A.M.E. leadership had a prominent place in the festivities after the Thanksgiving meal, with Bishop Daniel Payne introducing a U.S. senator and a speech delivered by The Rev. Henry McNeal Turner. This report illustrates the rhetoric of self-determination and equality, by emphasizing the intellectual ability of formally enslaved persons.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas H.C. Hinton, “Washington Correspondence, July 25th, 1863,” *Christian Recorder*, 1 Aug 1863, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database,(accessed: January 8, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Scholarship on Black women’s active role in the Black church includes, Evelyn B. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “‘Together and in Harness’: Women’s Traditions in the Sanctified Church,” *Signs*, 10 (Summer 1985); and Jualynne E. Dodson, *Engendering Church: Women, Power and the AME Church*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Co., 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Thomas H.C. Hinton, “Washington Correspondence,” *Christian Recorder*, 23 Jan 1864, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 11, 2015); Moses, 209. The American Civilization Society was an organization founded by African American leader Henry Garnet Highland (1815-1882). The organization was committed to supporting African American emigration efforts to Africa.

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous author, signed “An Occasional,” “Washington Correspondence, 1/24/1865” *Christian Recorder*, 28 Jan 1865, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: March 23, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Cromwell, 70.

The Rev. Daniel Payne, one of the A.M.E. leaders that promoted denominational expansion and education, offers one of the few accounts of Israel Church in his autobiography, *Recollections of Seventy Years*. Influenced by his carpentry training and his exploration of classical architectural styles, Payne was a major advocate for the A.M.E. architectural boom which spans 1860 through to the 1890s. But early in the congregation's history, Daniel Payne was a pivotal figure in invigorating Israel Bethel Church by serving as the congregation's third pastor. Emphasizing the insistence on black religious communities to claim urban space, the following excerpt offers a glimpse into the experience of African American clergy in church building in the District of Columbia during the 1840s. Recalling his arrival in Washington, D.C. in June 1843, Daniel Payne writes:

Before I could enter fully and freely upon my work as Christian minister I had to comply with a barbarous law of the District of Columbia, and give a bond of one thousand dollars to secure my "good behavior." *Such was the tribute which the bronzed image of God had to pay to the 'American Moloch.'* My consolation then was in the belief that I would live to see the day when such a law would be impossibility. Thank God, I have seen that day and recorded the fact in that same city. Israel Church was a structure of unique architecture; unique because, neither Gothic, Doric, Corinthian, Norman, Elizabethan, Romanesque, nor Egyptian, but it was—capacious. The society being too poor to put seats in the basement, I laid aside my books, bought a jack-plane, smoothing-plane, saw, hammer, rule, etc.; threw off my coat, and the Society furnishing the lumber, in a few weeks I was fully seated in the basement of Israel Church.<sup>38</sup>

Bishop Payne records how perceptions of African Americans as inferior were codified in government ordinances and protocols that were intended to monitor African American clergy. Moreover, his description of Israel Church eliminates the popular architectural styles of the nineteenth century and remains silent on the exterior aspects of the structure. However, the reader learns that it was "capacious" and able to accommodate large crowds. Payne implies, with his

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Payne and Charles Spencer, ed., *Recollections of Seventy Years*, (Nashville: Publishing House of the A.M.E. Sunday School, 1888), 75, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/payne70/payne.html>> (accessed: November 14, 2014).

mention of crafting wooden “seating” for the basement, that Israel Church contained at least one multipurpose space for non-religious functions.<sup>39</sup>

The congregation began a long tradition of serving as a symbolic denominational home church by hosting several Annual Conferences.<sup>40</sup> The close relationship between Israel’s pastors, congregation and A.M.E. bishops resulted in frequent visits. For example, in 1848, the church hosted the funeral of Bishop Edward Waters, one of the founding members of the Baltimore Conference (which included the Washington, DC area).<sup>41</sup> The *Christian Recorder* also documents how Israel Church responded to or observes national events. To honor the death of President Zachary Taylor and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Israel held memorial services for congregants while also draping the structure in black cloth for Lincoln’s funerary activities.<sup>42</sup> Emphasizing the visibility and proximity of their structure to the United States Capitol, this pioneering religious body capitalized on their prominent site by cultivating a community of prominent members who demonstrated the Victorian middle class bourgeois characteristics of the city’s Black elite.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cromwell, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Annual Conferences are regional annual meetings. Metropolitan AME Church. *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005)7-9. The church served this capacity in 1848, 1858 and 1862.

<sup>41</sup> President Taylor’s death was observed in a worship service recalled in Bishop Alexander Wayman, *My Recollections of African M. E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1881), 42, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001)

<<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wayman/wayman.html#p42>> (accessed: February 19, 2015). President Abraham Lincoln’s death was recognized by Israel Bethel Church in Joseph Wilson and Prof. George Barclay, “Requiescat In Pace, 4/18/1865” *Christian Recorder*, 29 April 1865, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015).

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Wilson and Prof. George Barclay, “Requiescat in Pace, 4/18/1865” *Christian Recorder*, 29 April 1865, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: May 21, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous author, signed “An Occasional,” “Washington Correspondence,” *Christian Recorder*, 28 Jan 1865, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: March 23, 2015). In this passage, Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church’s proximity to the U.S. Capitol is documented as the contributor recalls, “Being at the Capitol yesterday, I ventured into the gallery of the House of Representatives. There was nothing of consequence being done.”



Israel Church was often associated with the African American presence on Capitol Hill during the nineteenth century. In John W. Cromwell's essay, "The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia," he asserts that by the "stirring times" of the 1860s, "All eyes were on Washington, Israel Church played a leading part in the drama."<sup>44</sup> He goes on to observe: "Here the members of Congress, prominent among whom at the time were Benjamin F. Wade, Thaddeus Stevens and Henry Wilson, addressed the Negro citizens on the dominant issues of the day. In reckoning the influence of this church the individuals whose place was in the pew must not be forgotten"<sup>45</sup> Individuals associated with Israel Church took advantage of the institution's proximity to the Capitol, thus demonstrating Israel's role as a political nucleus for the African American community at large.<sup>46</sup> Israel Church facilitated the development of black intellectual activity and cultivated ministries that were instrumental to citywide social relief efforts. Historian Jacqueline M. Moore argues that social activities such as literary and cultural societies were used as socio-cultural capital, signifying one's middle class status.<sup>47</sup> Suggesting the, "...elite black adopted 'genteel performance,'" Moore writes, "...they indulged their tastes and demonstrated their cultural refinement by patronizing the theater, attending lectures and sponsoring musical programs."<sup>48</sup> Both antecedents to Metropolitan A.M.E. housed organizations that presented this type of cultural programming.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Cromwell, 69-70.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous author, signed "An Occasional," "Washington Correspondence," *Christian Recorder*, 28 Jan 1865, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: March 23, 2015). An anonymous contributor to the *Christian Recorder* reported on his time on Capitol Hill. Seven days before Congress approved the Emancipation Proclamation, the anonymous contributor, "...ventured into the gallery of the House of Representatives."

<sup>47</sup> Jacqueline M. Moore, "The Washington Black Elite," *Leading the Race: the Transformation of the Black elite in the Nation's Capital, 1880-1920*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Moore, 13-14.

<sup>49</sup> Cromwell, 70. John W. Cromwell established this historical trajectory for literary society activities among A.M.E. congregations, observing that from its inception, "...the Israel Lyceum was an institution not unlike Bethel Literary Association of thirty years later, that drew on the most intellectual men to listen to lectures, participate in discussions, and read dissertations on timely topics."

Israel Bethel founded one of the earliest AME literary societies in 1886 with the organization of Israel Lyceum. A lyceum was a term commonly used in nineteenth century American culture to refer to organizations that hosted public lectures and concerts.<sup>50</sup> This passage published in the *Christian Recorder* on October 18, 1862, announced the creation of Israel Church's Israel Lyceum:

The young men of Israel Church came together on Monday night last and organized a grand lyceum to be known as the Israel Lyceum. They elected H.M. Turner, President, Thomas H.C. Hinton, Vice-President, J.B. Cross, Secretary, William Tenny, Treasurer and J.T. Castin, McGill Pierce and William Brown Managers. The institution bids fair to be one of the very things to wake up the latent powers of the minds of all identified with it. Some twenty-three gave their names immediately, and several more are sending in their applications.<sup>51</sup>

The selection of this term situated their intellectual activity within the broader cultural landscape, thus negating the inferior perceptions and affirming African American intellectual culture.

According to the *Christian Recorder*, the Israel Lyceum flourished during the first five years of the 1860s. One *Christian Recorder* subscriber described it as "...an institution renowned for its brilliant performance of debates, addresses, essays and similar demonstrations of mind and matter..."<sup>52</sup> The public lectures provided a platform for African American intellectuals and professionals to educate the community on an array of subjects. In the first month of 1863, Solomon G. Brown, the Smithsonian Institute's first African American employee, came before the Israel Lyceum to deliver an instructive speech on geology where he summarized that history of the Earth, from the "Azoic age" through "human epochs."<sup>53</sup> The account even mentions the use

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<sup>50</sup> *Collins English Dictionary, Complete & Unabridged 10th Ed.* "lyceum." (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lyceum>> (accessed: January 15, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> H.M.T. [Possibly Rev. Henry McNeal Turner], "For the Christian Recorder, 10/18/1862" *Christian Recorder*, 18 Oct 1862, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>52</sup> Anonymous author, signed Spectator, "A Letter from Washington, D.C., 5/19/1864," *Christian Recorder*, 18 June 1864, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> H.M.T., "For the Christian Recorder: Washington Correspondence, 12/26/1862" *Christian Recorder*, 3 Jan 1863, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21,

of visual aids to illustrate the “a section of the earth’s crust, scanning sixteen strata.”<sup>54</sup> In 1864, several prominent men including William Slade, a White House staff member under President Abraham Lincoln, and the Rev. Richard H. Cain, one of the pioneers of A.M.E. expansion into the south and a future politician, discussed the prospect of a free school in the District.<sup>55</sup> This significant activity represents the earliest efforts in this community.<sup>56</sup>

Israel Lyceum events were bolstered by the support of the congregation’s women, as the Ladies’ Hall was utilized for proceedings of the Lyceum.<sup>57</sup> Women such as Miss Rebecca Taylor frequently presented on topic including women’s rights.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, in 1863, the *Christian Recorder* recognized a committee of women for their financial support of the Lyceum.<sup>59</sup> In addition to making fiscal supplements, these women also made material donations to the library,

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2015). Solomon Branch served as an employee of the Smithsonian Institute for forty-five years. During this period, he went from constructing exhibition cabinets to consulting and collaborating with Smithsonian Secretary James Baird. As a self-educated naturalist, Branch was a proficient illustrator, drafting maps and specimen illustrations for lectures.

For more information on Solomon G. Branch, see “Solomon G. Branch: First African American Employee at the Smithsonian Institute,” <<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/stories/solomon-brown-first-african-american-employee-smithsonian-institution>>(accessed: July 25, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Hinton, “Washington Correspondence, 1/23/1864” *Christian Recorder*, 30 January 1864, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database,(accessed: May 21, 2015); Thomas H.C. Hinton, “Washington Correspondence, 7/25/1863,” *Christian Recorder*, 1 Aug 1863, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015). Additionally, the association hosted debates on controversial social issues. In 1863, a panel of four men debated African American participation in the Civil War.

<sup>56</sup> Moore,15. Israel Lyceum precedes Howard University’s Eureka Literary (1872) and Bethel Literary Society (1881).

<sup>57</sup> Hinton, “Washington Correspondence, 8/1/1863” *Christian Recorder*, 8 August 1863, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Hinton, “Washington Correspondence, 12/12/1863” *Christian Recorder*, 26 Dec 1863, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Washington area contributor to the *Christian Recorder*, Thomas H.C. Hinton documented their efforts:

“...a committee of six ladies of this city commenced a series of festivals, at the ladies’ hall, at the rear of Israel Church. The hall is used by the Israel Lyceum as their place of meeting. The festivals are for the benefit of the Lyceum, to pay a debt of \$50, standing on certain improvements made. The names are as follows: Mrs. Emeline Hillery, Miss Ada Chew, Miss Agnes Burk, Miss Margaretta Douglass, Miss Maria Madison and Mrs. E.E. Hicks, with several other ladies as supernumeraries. These are the ladies who presented the library to the Lyceum, several months ago.”

in the form of books.<sup>60</sup> The Lyceum and the organizational library represent African Americans securing access to knowledge for themselves. Although these efforts demonstrate aspects of Victorian ideologies endorsed by Bishop Daniel Payne, they are equally situated in a broader A.M.E. literary tradition.<sup>61</sup> After 1852, when the *Christian Recorder* and Book Concern moved to Philadelphia autobiographical manuscripts authored by denominational leaders such as Bishop Daniel Payne and Chaplin Theophilus G. Steward became standard publications, circulated among a national network.

By the late 1860s, changes to the physical environment as a result of Capitol expansion marked the beginning of a period of dissent. On December 18, 1869, the *Christian Recorder* published a travelling clergy report on the condition of A.M.E. church. It said this of Israel Bethel Church:

We spent the last Sabbath in the District. The churches seem to be in a fair condition. Israel, the mother church of the District, is almost overlaid with mud. The Capitol improvements are telling wonderfully to its disadvantage, and ere long something must be done. The site is all that could be desired. Resting under the very shadow of the Dome of the Capitol, it will one day be a site that the best might covet. The fact is, we need in the District a modern first class church. Why not put it up on this dear old ground? Such a one too, as would reflect credit on the whole connection. Nor ought that single congregation alone, be expected to do the work. To begin with, Congress ought to indemnify them for the losses they have suffered. The soft clay which the authorities have emptied all around it makes it almost impossible to get there on a rainy Sabbath. In addition to what Congress might be pleased to do, the whole Church ought to help that congregation put up our Metropolitan.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Richard R. Wright, "Chronology of African Methodism," *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. , 1916), 13-16, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: March 19, 2015) and Donald F. Joyce, *Black book publishers in the United States: a historical dictionary of the presses, 1817-1990*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 14. This extends as far back as 1817 when leaders decided to establish a denominational publishing house and 1842 when the General Book Steward published Bishop Richard Allen's biography.

<sup>62</sup> Unidentified Author, "The Churches of the District," *Christian Recorder*, 18 Dec 1869, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015).

This unidentified author represents one of the earliest voices to express a need for a monumental structure to represent the A.M.E. denomination. As a response to the pressure to relocate, Israel Church leaders and A.M.E. Bishops worked to introduce the idea of a denominational national church in the form of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.

Less than a year after the initial suggestion of a denominational building project, conducted by the mother congregation of the District, Israel Church submitted a proposal to in the *Christian Recorder* entitled “A Metropolitan Church.”<sup>63</sup> The document concluded with the motion the Baltimore Conference approved which solidified plans to erect Metropolitan AME. In addition to renaming of the congregation as Metropolitan AME Church, the Conference agreed the AME denomination would be responsible for contributing financially to the cost of the new structure.<sup>64</sup> The endorsement of this project comes on the heels of a period of rapid denominational expansion during the post-emancipation, Reconstruction era.<sup>65</sup> In a graph published in *Negro Church* entitled “Growth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,” Dubois’s investigatory team reports that census data reveals the number of A.M.E. denomination grows from 285 churches in 1866 to 1,833 in 1876.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the 1880 census totals record

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<sup>63</sup> George T. Watkins and Baltimore Annual Conference, “A Metropolitan Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 6 Jul 1870, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database ,(accessed: March 20, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. The motion states, “WHEREAS, It is probable that Israel church property in Washington WASHINGTON, D.C., will shortly be purchased by the Government, for an extensions of the Capitol grounds, and WHEREAS, Many of the members of our Church from various parts of the country are being employed in the Government service, therefore, Resolved - First By the Baltimore Conference, in Conference assembled, that the Pastor and Trustees of the said Israel A.M.E. Church be, and they are hereby respectfully requested in the erection of another church... Resolved - Secondly that each of the twenty-one Annual Conferences of the A.M.E. Church be requested to contribute the sum of one hundred dollars towards the erection of the contemplated Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.”

<sup>65</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (1935), (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Du Bois, *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, 166.

the number of churches at 2,051.<sup>67</sup> The numerous entries in the *Christian Recorder* archive church dedicatory worship services across the denomination.

The efforts to erect a “National Church,” in order to maintain a prominent presence in Washington signaled a climactic moment that augmented the aesthetic and spatial prominence of the A.M.E. denomination. The selection of the name Metropolitan reflects a part of a larger national trend within nineteenth century of American denominations claiming space in the nation’s capital, thus providing the opportunity to exercise political influence. For instance in 1861, the *Christian Recorder* noted in an entry entitled, “Metropolitan Churches,” the failure of the Southern Methodist denomination to complete a building in the city.<sup>68</sup> By the late 1860s, the *Christian Recorder* notified their readership of the architectural progress of Methodism in Samuel T.G. Morsell’s design for Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church (erected 1854) which would boast a monumental tower and a cost of \$200,000.<sup>69</sup> (Figure 2.2) It is highly probably that these precedents influenced Metropolitan A.M.E. Church’s building committee in their selection of Morsell in the 1880s.<sup>70</sup> By 1870, Israel Bethel was forced to relocate as the federal government extended the grounds around the United States Capitol. This displacement altered the future of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. The organizational structure of the denomination communicated as the number of annual conferences more than doubled every ten years, transforming from 10 in 1866, 25 in 1876 and 40 in 1880.

<sup>68</sup> Unidentified Contributor from *Zion’s Herald*, “Metropolitan Churches,” *Christian Recorder*, 21 Sept 1861, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015). Annual conferences are yearly meetings of local AME conferences.

<sup>69</sup> Unidentified Author “The Methodist Episcopal Church is about erecting a magnificent church edifice...” *Christian Recorder*, 25 May 1867, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid; It should be noted that the A.M.E. Church could be considered the Methodist brethren of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The ties between he between denominations are historically rooted in Bishop Richard Allen’s early visit to the earliest known 1792 General Conference (national convening of the denomination), known as the “Christmas conference.” For more information on the relationship between the AME denomination and the Methodist Episcopal denomination, see Richard S. Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008) and J. Gordan Melton, “African American Methodist in the Antebellum and Reconstruction Period: A timetable, 1760-1876,” (Accessed: July 31, 2015).

the Metropolitan project.<sup>71</sup> The A.M.E. denomination also committed to contributing \$20,000 toward the construction project.<sup>72</sup> Considering these factors, Metropolitan A.M.E., from its conception, served as an architectural statement conveying the economic, cultural, political and religious potential of African Americans.

Despite continuous verbal support from the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church, the denomination did not contribute to Israel's efforts to erect a national church. On June 25, 1874, the *Christian Recorder* reported that Israel A.M.E. Church celebrated the placement of a cornerstone for a new structure.<sup>73</sup> This event assembled some of the leading figures affiliated with the African American community.<sup>74</sup> *Christian Recorder* contributor, Mr. Rochdale observed the following:

The building is to be situated on the northwest corner of 1st and B. Sts., S.W., fronting east. It will occupy a lot 90 X 60. The architecture is of the Gothic order, the material of brick and stone, and when completed it will be one of the finest edifices for worship in the District. The building will cost about \$42,000. Several thousand dollars have been raised... There is no doubt but that the officials and membership are today as firmly attached to the A.M.E. denomination of which they were the pioneers in this District nearly half a century ago, as they ever were in the past. It is also true that they are equally determined and united on matter of church property. The spirit of your paper is highly indorsed; and if the suggestions thrown out are acted upon in the spirit of love, there is every assurance that the wounds yet fresh with blood will be cleansed and healed.<sup>75</sup>

This report serves as evidence that Israel Bethel AME Church proceeded with the construction of Metropolitan Church despite an emerging divide between the congregation and the denomination.

The tension between this pioneering congregation and the denomination centered on the issue of

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<sup>71</sup> Sue A. Kohler and Jeffrey R. Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2(The Commission of Fine Arts)*, (Washington, DC: Commission of Fine Arts, 1988), 219.

<sup>72</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), Published through the Church, (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005), 6.

<sup>73</sup> Rochdale, "Laying of the Corner-stone of the Israel A.M.E. Church, 6/11/1874," *Christian Recorder*, 25 June 1874, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> The prominent figures included the abolitionist leader, the Rev. Jeremiah Eames Rankin; local Baptist leader, the Rev. John H. Brooks; and up-and-coming A.M.E. leader, the Rev. Benjamin F. Lee.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Information on John H. Brooks, pastor of Fifth Baptist Church in Washington, can be found in A.W. Pegues, *Our Baptist Ministers And Schools.*( Springfield, Mass.: Willey & Co., 1892) , 11-13.

church property ownership.<sup>76</sup> From the concluding words of the reports that seem to state denominational allegiance, this cornerstone ceremony, optimistically portrayed as a grand gesture with the potentiality of “conciliatory results,” occurred in the midst the dispute. This friction resulted in Israel Bethel’s elective withdrawal from the AME Church shortly after the cornerstone ceremony.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps this conflict prompted the AME denomination to augment plans for their Gothic national church.<sup>78</sup>

This passage also offers a moment to reflect on the ways in which Israel Church’s activity influenced the present Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The article cited structural dimensions substantially smaller than Metropolitan, which measures seventy-four by one hundred and ten feet with a rear addition.<sup>79</sup> Consistent with the augmentation of scale, Metropolitan AME Church’s estimated cost as projected in 1880, was \$65,000; a twenty-three thousand dollar increase.<sup>80</sup> Both Israel Metropolitan AME (1874) and Metropolitan AME Church (1881) cornerstone ceremonies featured the placement of symbolic objects as standard in church construction during the period. These items included textual documentation and material artifacts such as coins.<sup>81</sup> An additional aspect of the early plan for Metropolitan that was realized in the 1880 project is the architectural style, upholding a preference for the Gothic Revival. This

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<sup>76</sup> As stated in the denomination’s *Discipline*, the AME church upheld that the denomination is ultimately the owner of the property. The local congregation, led by stewards and trustees, are the custodians of the structure.

<sup>77</sup> The description of Israel AME’s cornerstone laying ceremony for their Metropolitan AME Church indicates there was an emerging tension between the local congregation and the denominational ownership of property. Because of Israel Bethel’s elective withdrawal from the AME Church in the 1870s, Metropolitan AME Church historical accounts eliminate this cornerstone ceremony for Israel Metropolitan AME.

<sup>78</sup> The proposed Israel Metropolitan AME was substantially smaller than the 1886 Metropolitan AME Church.

<sup>79</sup> Unidentified author, “The Metropolitan Church: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, DC-The New Enterprise of Building a Monumental Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 15 Jan 1880, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Rochdale, “Laying of the Corner-stone of the Israel A.M.E. Church, 6/11/1874,” *Christian Recorder*, 25 June 1874. Specific objects placed in the cornerstone included the names of individuals central to the project or association leadership, speeches, organizational documents or publications and select newspapers.



supports my conjecture that the A.M.E. denomination was eager to employ Gothic Revival architectural vocabularies for their national church.

Four months after the cornerstone service for Israel Metropolitan AME Church, reports in the *Christian Recorder* and the *National Republican*, document the legal battle ensuing between the church and denomination over the deed to the property.<sup>82</sup> Recounting secondary source information from a local clergyman, John Wesley Cromwell documents this stagnant controversial stage of the Metropolitan's early development:

...the church was negotiating for another lot on which to erect a new building, and the contention was whether the title to the new site should be held in trust for the congregation or for the denomination. The people contended that the property should be held in trust for them; the bishop, on the other hand, maintained that it should be in the name of the trustees of the denomination. The people were insistent and won their contention. A step further was the repudiation of the appointment made for them by the bishop, and the severance of their relations with the A.M. E. Church.<sup>83</sup>

Metropolitan AME Church inherited the rich legacy of Israel Bethel Church in its prominent site in close proximity to the governmental seat of power, and its dedication to cultural advancement among its congregants, clergy and associates. Over the next two years, as denominational leaders such as Bishops Daniel Payne, Alexander Wayman and future Bishop Richard Cain devised a plan to realize this project, Metropolitan AME disappears from discussion in the denominational newspaper.

### Union Bethel Church

Upon Israel Bethel AME Church's denominational exit, Union Bethel AME Church assumed the role of Washington, D.C.'s bedrock of African Methodism. This congregation inherited and augmented the Metropolitan AME Church project. Metropolitan AME Church

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<sup>82</sup> Bishop Jabez P. Campbell, "Bishop Campbell Vs. Israel Church," *Christian Recorder*, 29 Oct 1874, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Cromwell, 71.

fundraising efforts began to be annually publicized in the *Christian Recorder* starting 1876. Various factions of the local A.M.E. community and friends of the denomination primarily hosted these activities. Through the 1890s, the pages of the *Christian Recorder* frequently document Sinking Fund organizations providing funds for church construction.<sup>84</sup> As early as 1863, Union Bethel, established a Sinking Fund Association.<sup>85</sup> Archival holdings on Metropolitan A.M.E. Church contain an undated copy of Union Bethel's Sinking Fund Association's constitution.<sup>86</sup> The preface succinctly states the mission and role of this group:

Believing that the age in which we live demands, and the teaching of our holy religion requires, that well-ventilated and comfortable houses for divine worship should be in the possession of all Christian worshippers and that the present church building owned by the congregation of Union Bethel A.M.E. Church is entirely too small, poorly ventilated and in all respects inadequate to their wants; therefore the undersigned members and friends of the church do hereby agree to form ourselves into an Association for the purpose of collecting monies and depositing the same in bank, at not less than six per cent interest per annum, to be used exclusively for the furtherance of the new enterprise...<sup>87</sup>

This document further commits the participants to producing a bi-yearly report of the association's finances in addition to hosting monthly "entertainment" events to generate income.<sup>88</sup>

On July, 6, 1838, a prayer group in the northwest quadrant of DC founded Union Bethel in the domestic setting of "one, Mr. Bolden, on L Street near Fifteenth Street."<sup>89</sup> Beginning with

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<sup>84</sup> Richard. H Cain, "Financiering in the A.M.E. Church: the Necessity of which Is Seen in the Following Proposition," *Christian Recorder*, 19 Aug 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: March 18, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> John A. Simms, "History of Various Church Activities," Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-34, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>86</sup> This organization proposed strict membership guidelines that required prospective members to be admitted by majority vote and a series of financial obligations including an entrance fee of twenty-five cents, a monthly fee of ten cents and fine penalties for missed payments.

<sup>87</sup> "Constitution of the Sinking Fund Association of Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, "Preface," 1, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-32, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 4 & 5. The city's network of Sinking Fund Associations sponsored the "grand concert" at Lincoln Hall in the Spring of 1877 to support church building project. The local and national religious community mobilized to ensure the institutional building campaigns.

the initiative of Israel Bethel Church laymen, Mr. Robert Wilkerson, Israel Bethel Church fostered the growth of the denomination by creating satellite congregations across the city. Wilkerson, an enslaved man who served Israel Bethel as a class leader, promoted the A.M.E. organization by “recruiting the forces in 1837 for the formation of the proposed new church in the western part of the city.”<sup>90</sup> Wilkerson facilitated prayer meetings and class meetings three nights a week, possibly in the home of Mr. Bolden.<sup>91</sup> Bishop Richard Allen’s colleague, the Rev. Clayton Durham served as pastor to Union Bethel with the assistance of Israel Bethel Church minister, the Rev. John Cornish.<sup>92</sup> At the spring 1840 convening of the Baltimore Annual Conference, the denomination granted Union Bethel’s request for admission as a congregation independent of Israel Bethel AME Church.<sup>93</sup> In 1841, Union Bethel purchased a lot on the 1500

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<sup>89</sup> John Wesley Cromwell, “The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia,” *The Journal of Negro History* 7, (January 1922), 73, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cromwell/menu.html>> (accessed: March 20, 2014); Wesley, “A Century of African Methodism at Metropolitan, 1838-1938,” 1, Simms Family Papers, 2-44, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>90</sup> John A. Simms, Sr., “Biographical sketches of members,” 5, Simms Family Papers, 1-27, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University; *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, First Edition*, (Philadelphia: Published by Richard Allen and Jacob Tapsico for the African Methodist Connection of the United States, 1817), 103, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/ame/ame.html>> (accessed: April 27, 2015). The AME Discipline states that each church congregation be divided into classes, under the supervision of a lay class leader. The Discipline states the class leader’s duties as follows: “I. To see each person in his class once a week at least; in order 1. To inquire how their souls prosper. 2. To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require. 3. To receive what they are willing to give, towards the relief of the preachers, church, and poor. II. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week; in order 1. To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov’d. 2. To pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.”

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*; Jefferson S. Coage, “The History of the Memorial Windows,” 3, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University. This early congregation included some enslaved individuals such as Robert McKerson who did “more to bring about the organization of Union Bethel Church than any other person.”

<sup>92</sup> Wesley, i.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

block of M street in the NW quadrant of the city.<sup>94</sup> In that same year, “a small, frame building was erected.”<sup>95</sup>

In 1851, Union Bethel completed a larger building effort, erecting a modest brick church and parsonage.<sup>96</sup> The Rev. Alexander Wayman, who would later be appointed to Israel Church, documents the construction of this structure in his memoir, *My Recollection, African M.E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (1881). Underscoring the congregation's commitment to the material development of the church, Wayman includes the example of Abigail Nugent who, “...was so much delighted that she took a hod of bricks and carried them to the building.”<sup>97</sup> In addition to archiving the difficulties the congregation encountered in completing the structure in the scheduled time (before the opening of the Baltimore Annual Conference in April 1852), the author also discusses the fundraising role of the pastor in a building project as he traveled throughout several A.M.E. conferences during 1851, collecting the sum of \$100 a month for the construction project.<sup>98</sup> Women played a particularly important part in this church building effort. Alethea Tanner, an African American female entrepreneur, provides an example of such individual efforts.<sup>99</sup> Tanner turned her fundraising efforts toward Union Bethel during the late 1840s by leading the women of the

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<sup>94</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), Published through the Church, (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005), 2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Kohler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2(The Commission of Fine Arts)*, 219.

<sup>97</sup> Bishop Alexander Wayman, *My Recollections of African M. E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1881), 46, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wayman/wayman.html#p42>> (accessed: February 19, 2015).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>99</sup> Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology, 300 Years of African American History*, (Hoboken: J. Wiley, 2005), 362. Tanner lived off the income from selling goods at her personally-own produce stand in the District.

church in a bake sale that garnered \$200.<sup>100</sup> Union Bethel also established deep relationships with A.M.E. bishops as exemplified by Bishops Willis Nazrey and Daniel Payne delivering the dedicatory sermons for Union Bethel's new structure.<sup>101</sup>

A Metropolitan AME Church history written between 1936 and 1949 includes a rare image of Union Bethel's 1850s edifice.(Figure 2.3) The property consisted of adjoining two-story buildings, situated on a lot with considerable space around the complex as indicated by foliage and fencing. The tripartite division of the street façade established a balanced visual plane for chromatic and spatial rhythms. The articulated pedimented gable emphasized the overall triangular form of the structure. The white trim communicates the horizontality and the mass of the church. The upper register of windows convey the spatial rhythm and dimension, as seen in the contrast of light and dark tones. The reproduction seems to indicate the windows were situated in subtly, rounded-arch openings.<sup>102</sup> This group of windows breaks the horizontal cord of the neoclassical entablature. As a result, each white slab visually suggests a variation of a Doric capital, possibly crowning four engaged columns or pilasters. The horizontal capitals alternate with the triangular foliate ornaments that extend the vertical line of the windows.<sup>103</sup>

Advantageously located near the White House, Union Bethel gained a reputation for being an elite church and a hub of the African American landscape in DC because of its

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<sup>100</sup> Kohler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2(The Commission of Fine Arts)*, 219-220. This job enabled her to purchase the freedom of twenty-two of her closest family and friends; Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, 46-47. She would go on to be a member of Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church the first African American Presbyterian congregation.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>102</sup> This interpretation was based on a shadow that could be created from slightly projected bricks.

<sup>103</sup> Kohler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2(The Commission of Fine Arts)*, 226. According to church oral tradition, this complex fulfilled various social and practical functions including serving as educational space and a station on the Underground Railroad. There is also a narrative of that suggests the current 1886 structure was erected by black craftsmen. It more than likely that this 1850s structure.

community leadership, intellectual activities and financial determination.<sup>104</sup> Similarly to Israel Bethel Church, Union Bethel developed under the denomination's most prominent leaders such as the Third Bishop of the A.M.E. Church, the Rev. Edward Waters and the Seventh Bishop, Alexander Wayman.<sup>105</sup> The congregation was a consistent financial contributor to the denomination as indicated in the frequent appearance of Union Bethel members in "Dollar Money Reports," published in the *Christian Recorder*.<sup>106</sup> In John A. Simms, Sr.'s Metropolitan Church history, he mentions that some members "mortgaged their homes along with several other Trustees to save this church."<sup>107</sup> Some of the most prominent figures in Black Washington were members or had nominal affiliation with this house of worship.<sup>108</sup> The following was said of church trustee Henry Lassiter: "His active and progressive mind prompted him to work earnestly for the few temporal and financial improvement of the church, his large acquaintance with a high class of influential people enabled him to engage their personal aid and influence entertainment for the benefit of the Church."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Moore, 16; Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows," 3, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Union Bethel also boasted the membership of Mrs. Louisa Peters, "the oldest member of this branch of the Church."

<sup>105</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), Published through the Church, (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005) 2.

<sup>106</sup> Unidentified author, "Dollar Money Record," *Christian Recorder*, 31 July 1873, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 24, 2015).

<sup>107</sup> John A. Simms, "History of Various Church Activities," Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-34, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>108</sup> Simms, "John R. Freeman," Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-40, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Early member biographies as captured by John A. Simms documents several examples of reputable members. For instance, John R. Freeman was a dedicated participant in the Sabbath school who grew up in Union Bethel. In 1852, he decided to immigrate to Liberia, where he was later appointed Chief Clerk of the Treasury.

<sup>109</sup> Simms, "Mr. Henry Lassiter," Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-39, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Mentioning senators, naval officers, judges, influential clergy, Simms provides a list in figures he hosted which end with the inclusion of Dr. Booker T. Washington. This account then goes on to describe how Lassiter escorted guest through an orchestrated choreography of Washington, D.C. Black landscape, beginning at Lassiter's home in passing the High School Cadets ending at Union Bethel AME Church. These instances reinforced the notion that Union Bethel Church emerged as a community hub that provided the denomination the advantage of bringing A.M.E. activities such as annual conferences.

Union Bethel A.M.E. Church evolved into one of the leading A.M.E. congregations of the city, responding to the condition of African Americans' social, spiritual and intellectual needs. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the congregation began to strategize ways to be of service. In October 1862, eighteen Union Bethel members formed the Union Relief Association to mobilize resources and advocate for the condition of African American persons then referred to as contraband.<sup>110</sup> At the founding meeting of the organization, fifty-three people volunteered for membership and donated \$15.75.<sup>111</sup> Union Bethel also participated in the 1862 citywide Thanksgiving event described in Israel Church's history, by donating the second highest amount, \$30.<sup>112</sup> Union Bethel also forged an intellectual tradition under the auspices of the Bethel Literary and Historical Society. Emphasizing the impact of Bethel Literary and Historical Society in his 1922 history of black churches in Washington, D.C., former organizational president, John W. Cromwell writes:

The organization of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association by Bishop Payne in the early autumn of 1881 was an event worth chronicling because of its immediate influence on the individual church, the community, the denomination and the entire country. For twenty-five years the Bethel Literary in the fall and winter seasons was recognized as an intellectual clearing house. In distant communities the reflex influence was just as unmistakable because of the

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<sup>110</sup> Unidentified Author, "Union Relief Association," *Christian Recorder*, 4 Oct 1862, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 24, 2015); "Notes on Origin of Union Relief Association," Simms Family Papers, 2-39, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Women were prominent in the leadership of this organization, as the Executive Committee was comprised completely of women, and women filled the elected positions of vice-president and treasurer.; Thomas E. Green, "Address of the Union Relief Association of the Union Bethel Church, Washington, D.C.," *Christian Recorder*, 8 Nov 1862, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 24, 2015). In the first organizational address to denomination published in the *Christian Recorder*, organization president and church leader, Thomas E. Green made the following appeal: "We have organized an association, and enclosed a copy of our constitution, hoping that it will meet your approbation, and, in the name of humanity, and the ties which bind us together in the bonds of a common brotherhood, you will give us all the aid in your power by contributing clothing for adults, or children of both sexes. Bedding, or bed clothing, old or new, money, or any nourishment for the sick will be thankfully received by the Association and faithfully applied by the Executive Committee."

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> H.M.T. "Washington Correspondence, 11/28/1862" *Christian Recorder*, 6 Dec 1862, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 24, 2015)

newspaper, whose Washington correspondents did not fail to register the utterances and the discussions which the Literary occasioned.<sup>113</sup>

Bethel Literary and Historical Society was a source of pride for the denomination as it was the first organization under Washington's listing in Richard R. Wright's *Centennial Encyclopedia of African Methodism* (1916).<sup>114</sup>

Since his appointment to Israel Bethel Church in the 1840s, Payne had been a catalytic personality looming over the Baltimore Conference.<sup>115</sup> The established relationship between the Union Bethel, Daniel Payne and the AME Episcopacy ensured that Bethel Literary and Historical Society would represent a beacon of denominational and racial pride in *Centennial Encyclopedia of African Methodism*. This tradition and these characteristics made Union Bethel the ideal congregation to assume the role of erecting an A.M.E. national church. Both Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church and Union Bethel A.M.E. Church engaged in the cultural, intellectual and spiritual ministries promoted by the denomination. These early AME congregations capitalized on their

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<sup>113</sup>Cromwell,74; John A. Simms, "History of Various Church Activities," Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Papers, 2-34, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. In John A. Simm's handwritten accounts of Union Bethel, Simms states the following:

"The original organization of Bethel Literary and Historical Society by Bishop Daniel A. Payne was 1859. Edward M. Thomas as President, Thomas E. Green, Treasurer, John M. Turley, secretary. Executive Committee Henry Simmons, John A. Simms, Richard Posey, Benjamin C. Freeman. It went out of existence for several years, at the death of President Edward M. Thomas. But [it] was reorganized by Bishop Payne November 9, 1881 in Bethel Hall, Mr. Robert Smith President."

<sup>114</sup> Richard R. Wright, "Washington—Bethel Literary and Historical Society," *Centennial Encyclopedia of African Methodism*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 367. Although Daniel Payne is often credited with the initial concept, Wright suggests that the twelfth A.M.E. Bishop, Henry McNeal Turner should be acknowledged, as he proposed literary societies as an auxiliary unit of the denomination.

<sup>115</sup> Bishop Alexander Wayman, *My Recollections of African M. E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 65, republished(Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001)

<<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wayman/wayman.html#p65>> (accessed: February 19, 2015).; Richard R. Wright, "Bishops of the A.M.E. Church," *Cyclopedia of African Methodism*,5, republished(Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: March 29, 2015). The Rev. Alexander Wayman's memoir documents Payne's contribution in architecturally, intellectually and spiritually augmenting the Baltimore Conference. In addition to "organizing" building projects for congregations Payne was consistently present for celebratory events surrounding denominational construction projects. Bishop Payne is credited with initiating the organization of St. Paul's AME Church, in northwest DC, and Ebenezer AME Church, Georgetown. Today both congregations continue to thrive. Ebenezer AME Church, Georgetown, relocated to Fort Washington, Maryland and is one of the few AME megachurches.



proximity to national seats of power. Their rituals and behaviors came to symbolize racial advancement through middle class African American means, grounded in Classical Black Nationalism.

### **Contextualizing Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Washington, D.C.'s Gothic Revival Landscape**

Throughout the nineteenth century, architects explored the potential of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical structures as a viable architectural style to punctuate the capital. In 1804, Benjamin Latrobe designed Christ Church in the neighborhood surrounding the Navy Yard. (Figure 2.4) This Episcopal Church is the earliest example of Gothic Revival church architecture in the national capital. The two-story Flemish-bond structure bears an imposing symmetrical triangular façade. The buttresses, pointed arch entry bay, and the central tower, replete with finials, emphasize the Gothic character of the church. The aforementioned components alongside the Gothic Revival window program establish spatial depth and variety in the façade. The interior of the church is dominated by a long central aisle with a U-shaped gallery.<sup>116</sup> The interior also reinforced the style of the structure by boasting an elliptically vaulted ceiling. Although this structure underwent several alterations, Christ Church initiated an exploration of the ecclesiastical Gothic Revival styles that would impact church building throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup>

In 1836, the Rev. John Henry Hopkins authored *Essay on Gothic Architecture, with Various Plans and Drawing for Churches* that would influence American Gothic Revival design. Advocating for the dynamic, perpendicular lines, the minister promoted this style as the

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<sup>116</sup> Nancy C Taylor, "National Register of Historic Place Nomination Form: Christ Church, Washington Parish," <<http://focus.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/69000291.pdf>> (Accessed: August 5, 2015).

<sup>117</sup>Diane Maddex, *Historic Buildings of Washington, D.C.* (Pittsburgh: Ober Park Associates, 1973). Christ, Church is often overlooked for Latrobe's St. John's Church in Lafayette Square. Considered, Latrobe's "thesis on church architecture, St. John's is located near the White House and has historically hosted the U.S. President.

quintessential choice for sacred architecture. The essay included a brief history of the ambiguous origins of Gothic architecture, concluding that Gothic Revival architecture is most akin to the biblical description of the Temple of Solomon.<sup>118</sup> In addition to financial cost and furnishing rules, the author offered suggestions on the importance the pointed arch in the sanctuary plan.<sup>119</sup> *Essay on Gothic Architecture* provided illustrations of structures that presented the recommended Gothic Revival structure as an imposing English influenced building adorned with vertical elements like towers, buttresses and finials.<sup>120</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, church architecture essays and manuals continued to be published with denominational affiliations.<sup>121</sup> For example, in 1856, the Methodist Church endorsed the Rev. George Bowler's *Chapel and Church Architecture, with Designs for Parsonages*.

Gothic Revival architecture continued to be promoted through highly visible building projects by the American Episcopal denomination. By the 1840s, Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church in New York City augmented this stylistic tradition.<sup>122</sup> Influenced by A.W.N. Pugin and the English Ecclesiologists, Richard Upjohn extended the nave-aisle plan, and balanced the length with an imposing tower that measured 281 feet.<sup>123</sup> This church established the standard for Gothic Revival architecture in the United States with both exterior and interior attributes. In addition to designing space for large scale stained glass program, Upjohn hung the plaster vaulted ceiling

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<sup>118</sup> John Henry Hopkins, *Essays on Gothic Architecture with Various Plans and Drawing for Churches*, (Burlington, VT, 1836), 29, as republished on Anglican History.org, <  
<http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/jhhopkins/gothic1836/>> (Accessed: August 5, 2015).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>121</sup> Brian Zugay, "Towards a 'New Era' in Church Building: Architectural Reform in American Protestantism in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2004). This dissertation dedicates a chapter to architectural literature produced by Protestant expansion committees.

<sup>122</sup> Megan B. Aldrich and Paul Atterbury, *A.W.N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, (New Haven: Published for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York by Yale University Press, 1995), 203. Trinity Church was erected 1839-1842.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid; Everard M. Upjohn, "Trinity," *Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman* (1938), (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968).

with wooden trusses.<sup>124</sup> In 1846, James Renwick drafted a medieval Revival elevation for the Smithsonian Castle, adorned with towers and stained glass windows.<sup>125</sup> Here, the architect balanced the lateral massing with the multiple towers and pinnacles. Although the Lombard Romanesque plan was ultimately selected, Renwick's scheme indicated the influence of Gothic Revival architectural vocabularies in the District of Columbia. James Renwick's Trinity Episcopal Church (1848-1850) emerged as the standard for Gothic Revival architecture, boasting twin towers just in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol. (Figure 2.5) During the late nineteenth century, this city was a site for major ecclesiastical commissions that attracted some of the leading practitioners in religious and public architecture.<sup>126</sup>

In addition to situating the architectural emergence of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in the largely Gothic Revival religious landscape of Washington, D.C., it is important to place the structure in the larger career of the architect, Samuel T.G. Morsell. Several articles published in the *Washington Post* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century characterize Morsell as a respected civic leader, known for his frequent appointments to the Board of Director for Citizens' National Bank and the Washington, D.C. Commissioner's board of assistant assessors.<sup>127</sup> A 1902 *Washington Post* article entitled, "Identified with Capitol Growth," provides the most thorough biographical information about Samuel Morsell, a product of the local education system of Prince George's County, Maryland. In addition to a notable architectural career with

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<sup>124</sup> Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 147.

<sup>125</sup> Heather Ewing and Amy Ballard, *A Guide to Smithsonian Architecture*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2009), 14.

<sup>126</sup> By 1870, only a few blocks from Union Bethel's M street site, Luther Place Memorial Church was built at Thomas Circle. The design, by architect Judson York, provided another approach to Gothic Revival architectures ideals; this structure's verticality is emphasized in the gradual elevation of tower to steeple.

<sup>127</sup> Unidentified author, "To Equalize Assessment: A Board of Assessors Yesterday Appointed by the President" *The Washington Post*, 23 Nov 1892, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database, (Accessed: May 30, 2015).; Unidentified author, "EXCISE BOARD'S DEFENSE: Their Authority for Refusing Mr. Sheehy's License" *The Washington Post*, Aug 11, 1897, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database, (Accessed: May 30, 2015). Morsell served a ten year tenure on the Washington, D.C. Commissioner's board of assistant assessors.

building projects in Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas, Virginia and the District, Morsell was appointed superintendent of public works as well as assistant commissioner of public works.<sup>128</sup> Alongside his photographic portrait (Figure 2.6), the biography recognized the architect as a specialist in public architecture as exemplified in his signature projects: Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church and the main building for the Government Asylum for the Insane.<sup>129</sup> Samuel T.G. Morsell was also renowned as a vocalist and served as choir leader for several Methodist Episcopal congregations.<sup>130</sup>

Morsell completed his 1854 master work, Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, only four years after Renwick's Trinity Episcopal Church. It stood apart from Washington, D.C.'s Gothic Revival churches by boasting a tower and steeple that rose 240 feet above the ground.<sup>131</sup> When examining the interiors of Morsell's Washington churches, both M.E. and A.M.E., three defining elements characterize his organization of liturgical space: slightly curved, inclined seating accompanied by a gallery, repetition of verticality in surface ornament and the centrality of the stained glass lancets and rose windows. Metropolitan M.E. was designed with vaulted ceilings thus repeating the pointed arch throughout the sanctuary space. He placed the rose window behind the pulpit platform. The national media celebrated the completion of the structure in text and image. For instance, in 1867, *Harper's Weekly* published an illustration of the structure that communicated the style and scale of the memorial church.<sup>132</sup> (Figure 2.2) Although the architect is not named in the accompanying text, his design represents the Gothic Revival's enduring popularity. The selection of Morsell reflects a symbolic statement on race relations as an

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<sup>128</sup> Unidentified author, "Identified with Capital's Growth," *The Washington Post*, 8 May 1905, *Washington Post*, 1877-ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed: April 10, 2015).

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

<sup>130</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture*, Vol. 2. (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 230.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> "Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," *Harper's Weekly*, 5 Jan 1867, Alexander Press *Harper's Weekly*, (accessed: August, 2015).

African American congregation secured a white architect for the commission.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, Morsell's selection also suggests the Building Committee's familiarity with his Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church must be considered alongside the civic and educational architecture erected for African Americans during the late nineteenth century in Washington, DC. In 1872, the German-American architect Adolph Cluss completed the Charles Sumner School, the "flagship school of the segregated, African American school system."<sup>134</sup> Cluss designed and erected almost 90 structures over the course of his twenty-seven year career which included serving as a draftsman for the Federal Government and operating his own private architectural practice.<sup>135</sup> Six of these buildings were churches. In fact, his earliest project was the new Sixteenth Street site for Foundry Methodist Church (1864-1866).<sup>136</sup> This structure and his next project, Calvary Baptist Church, suggest Cluss aimed to establish himself as a competitor to Morsell in the area of church construction. Although Foundry boasted a symmetrical façade, punctuated with finials and squat towers at each corner, Calvary Baptist Church shared the Gothic Revival facets of Morsell's Metropolitan Methodist. One of the central differences between the

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<sup>133</sup> James A. Handy and John A. Simms, "The New Union Bethel," *Christian Recorder*, 1 Mar 1883, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database.

<sup>134</sup> "Adolph Cluss: an International Project," <<http://www.adolf-cluss.org/index.php?sub=3.5>> (accessed: August 1, 2015); Benjamin Forgey, "'Red Architect' Adolf Cluss: A Study in Sturdy," *Washington Post*, 17 Sept 2005, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/16/AR2005091601904.html>> (accessed May 30, 2015). The 2005 exhibition "Adolph Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America—Shaping a Capital City Worthy of a Republic" highlighted his roots as a "Red Architect," as evidenced by correspondence with Karl Marx.; Sara E. Wermeil, "Adolf Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America—Shaping a Capital City Worthy of a Republic," *Technology and Culture*, 47, 2006: 572-3. However, Construction Historian, Sara E. Wermeil, cautions against this interpretation, asserting, "Cluss's democratic spirit informed his criticism of pretentious architecture like the Washington Monument, which he considered an improper memorial for 'one of the most human of men.'"

<sup>135</sup> Sara E. Wermeil, "Adolf Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America—Shaping a Capital City Worthy of a Republic," 572.

<sup>136</sup> "Adolph Cluss: an International Project," <<http://www.adolf-cluss.org/index.php?sub=3.5.01&lang=en&content=w&topSub=washington>>(accessed: August 1, 2015). This structure was formerly located at 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and G Street NW.

structures is Cluss's handling of the spire. Calvary Baptist Church emphasizes the ascension of the tower by using a lattice-like pattern, thus reducing the material and weight of the tower.<sup>137</sup>

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church reflects an aesthetic awareness of several structures that dotted the M Street corridor, specifically, Cluss's Charles E. Sumner School. (Figure 2.7) In 1866, the Freedman's Bureau established a school on the site at 17<sup>th</sup> and M Streets.<sup>138</sup> Located only one block west of the site of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Sumner was erected on a lot adjacent to Bethel Hall, the structure that temporarily housed the Union Bethel during the construction of Metropolitan. Cluss ordered the vertical orientation of the structure according to Second Empire style standards, enriching the Mansard roof with dormer windows and slate ornamentation to achieve visual weight. This tonal rhythm repeats in the arches of the lancet windows. The use of simplified architectural columns and capitals at the main entry structurally supported the arched portico. Metropolitan A.M.E. Church incorporates design elements that are found in Cluss' body of work.

Cluss earned the reputation for working with red-pressed brick, contributing to Washington's early caricature as a "red-brick city."<sup>139</sup> Locally manufactured and fire resistant, red pressed brick had economic and technological advantages.<sup>140</sup> Cluss used it in an array of his structures, including the Franklin School (1865), the Arts and Industries Building (1879), and the

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<sup>137</sup> James Goode and Richard Longstreth, *Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003). This project was designed with his peer, Kammerhueber. One point of comparison between Samuel Morsell and Adolph Cluss is how they construct Gothic towers. Unlike Cluss' lattice-tower, Morsell's Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church tower was heavy and eventually deemed a structural hazard because of the instability of the tower and spire.

<sup>138</sup> "Charles Sumner School," Washington, A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc58.htm>> (accessed: May 8, 2015).

<sup>139</sup> Dr. Christhard Schrenk, "Adolf Cluss as the dominant architect for the Red Brick City," <<http://www.adolf-cluss.org/index.php?sub=3.5>> (accessed: February 17, 2015).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

Sumner School (1872).<sup>141</sup> Wermeil's description of Cluss's impact on Washington architecture reinforces the idea that the Charles Sumner School affected the style of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Wermeil states:

What can be said about his buildings generally is that they were colorful, with polychromatic brick and slate; were ornamented with architectural terra-cotta, iron cresting, pinnacles and statues; and were visually varied, with window openings of every shape, projecting towers and pavilions... In his pragmatic approach to design and interest in experimenting with new construction methods and materials, Cluss was like other German-American architects of the time...<sup>142</sup>

On a more reduced scale, Morsell displayed an affinity for these aesthetic and design values, evident in Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. In addition to the tonal contrast of the brick and granite in the façade, Morsell also demonstrated a preference for sculptural qualities in his incorporation of granite moldings and pinnacles. Morsell used the deep voids created by the pointed arch canopy of the portico to establish variations repeated throughout the façade. Maintaining aspects of his earlier ecclesiastical architectural style, Morsell emphasized variation through the asymmetricality in Metropolitan. As the second closest house of worship to the north of the White House, Metropolitan A.M.E. church's construction within seven blocks represents an example of African American institutions influencing Washington, DC's ecclesiastical landscape.<sup>143</sup>

African American religious communities in Washington, DC also were active participants in shaping the architectural character of the nation's capital. By 1876, St. Augustine's

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid; Illustration of Sumner School, (incorrectly labeled as Franklin School), Cook Family Papers, 2-74, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC. This is evidenced by the inclusion of an illustration of the structure in the Cook Family Papers at Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University The pioneers of Union Bethel and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church cherished Sumner School.

<sup>142</sup> Sara E. Wermeil, "Adolf Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America--Shaping a Capital City Worthy of a Republic," *Technology and Culture*, 47, 2006: 573 & 576.

<sup>143</sup> Metropolitan AMEC is the second closest church along the northern axis of the White House. Metropolitan AMEC is located north of Benjamin Latrobe's St. John's Church, constructed in 1826. For more information history of ecclesiastical structures located near the White House, see James Goode and Richard Longstreth, *Capital Losses: a Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003).

Roman Catholic Church, the District's oldest African American Roman Catholic congregation, built a vibrant Gothic Revival church on Fifteenth Street, NW, between L and M Streets.<sup>144</sup> (Figure 2.8) This structure set the new standard for African Americans religious architecture in terms of the architectural style. As early as 1868, Baltimore architect E. Francis Baldwin drafted plans for a Gothic Revival cruciform structure with an impressive sacred space that amplified the stylistic features emphasized in the facade.<sup>145</sup> The structure was built of red-pressed brick with Seneca and Ohio freestone accents.<sup>146</sup> The architect divided the entry bay into a tripart configuration, with granite steps and iron hand railings. Spanning sixty-five feet in width, the symmetrical façade concealed a cruciform church plan that facilitated Roman Catholic liturgical practices as well as functional spaces for this African American community. Pinnacles flanked three pedimented gables, establishing a strong vertical orientation, culminating in the Latin cross that rested atop of the street façade. Some of these elements were replicated in the case of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. St. Augustine also contracted for the services of H.F. Gernhardt to design the stained-glass window program that was crowned by a rose window, sixteen feet in diameter.<sup>147</sup>

Although St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church would share similar Gothic Revival elements in the exterior design, the interior spaces differ greatly. The basement level of St. Augustine's was described as having high ceilings with several rooms dedicated for the Sunday school, a free school for children and parish organizational activity.<sup>148</sup> Unlike Metropolitan, St. Augustine's sanctuary boasted a fifty-four feet high pointed-

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<sup>144</sup> Fitzpatrick & Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital*, (New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, 2001), 176.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 201-202.

<sup>146</sup> Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 85.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 85-86.

<sup>148</sup> Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 88.



arch ceiling, accented by Gothic-style ribbing.<sup>149</sup> The arch form is repeated throughout the nave and the chancel. In the nave arcade, two tiers of columns, with ornate gilded capitals, flank each pointed arch.<sup>150</sup> This space also contained two side altars and a separate baptistery with its own stained-glass program. The pews in the sanctuary were crafted from ash and walnut with jewel-toned cushions.<sup>151</sup> The archdiocese commissioned a Neapolitan craftsman to fresco the walls and commissioned Roman fresco painter Filippo Costaggini to paint figurative murals behind the altar in the pointed-arch niches.<sup>152</sup> After completing his dome fresco at the United States Capitol, Costaggini painted these life-size murals of St. Augustine at the center, St. Martin de Porres, to the right and St. Peter Claver, to the left.<sup>153</sup> This structure remained a fixture of the M Street corridor until 1947, when it was demolished.<sup>154</sup> Considering St. Augustine's proximity and the stylistic similarities, the minds behind Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's Gothic Revival design must have considered this structure and its design programs.

Although not on the same scale, the AME denomination erected Gothic Revival structures in decades before Metropolitan AME Church's erection. One excellent example is the Victorian Gothic Mount Moriah A.M.E. Church in Anne Arundel Country, Maryland. Mount Moriah was recognized as the earliest institution founded by "free persons of color," in that area.<sup>155</sup> (Figure 2.9) The small-scale auditorium plan

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 86. The columns on the ground level also supported gas lighting fixtures.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. MacGregor describes the original cushions as "jewel-toned." Hopkin's *Essays on Gothic Architecture* identifies red cushions as preferable. This source also acknowledged purple as a cushion color gaining popularity.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 86-87.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 278. The Baltimore Archdiocese sold the land to the *Washington Post*; Ibid, 281. After outgrowing the space, the congregation moved to a large auditorium, seven blocks north of the old site, causing the congregation to experience "social dislocation."

<sup>155</sup> L. Trieschmann and K. Williams, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Mount Moriah AME Church (Banneker-Douglass Museum)," <[http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se5/001000/001600/001635/pdf/msa\\_se5\\_1635.pdf](http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se5/001000/001600/001635/pdf/msa_se5_1635.pdf)> (accessed: August 3, 2015).

church was designed by bridge builder Nathaniel P. Clow and constructed between 1874 and 1876.<sup>156</sup> The church's façade was defined by red-pressed brick, a pointed arch and stained-glass windows.<sup>157</sup> A former pastor of Mount Moriah A.M.E. Church spoke highly of the recent architectural renovation, exclaiming, "Mt. Moriah is a thing of beauty."<sup>158</sup>

He cited the following *Washington Bee* description:

This church has been remodeled at a cost of \$7,800. The entire front is new of pressed brick, the windows are new and modern; the pulpit has been alcoved giving more room, wainscoting and all wood, showing its face carved, polished and finished in hard oil; new and modern seats take the place of old one. Two new rapid transit furnaces with cold air extractor heat the entire building like charms. A new pipe organ has been built on the enlarged choir gallery, where new chairs, carpet, railings and gates make a magnificent improvement over former arrangements. New carpet everywhere, new doors and stair ways; the basement has been enlarged by removing two small class-rooms and throwing all in one. A basement kitchen is provided for under the rear end. The roof and all of its [construction] are entirely new, covered with slate Gothic ceiling; the center window with stained glass is a superb piece of workmanship. The edifice is a credit to the race, the city and exemplifies the taste, wisdom and constructability of the pastor...<sup>159</sup>

While there is no record of Mount Moriah's initial dedication in the *Christian Recorder*, the edifice was eventually recognized as a source of cultural pride. It is highly probable that Mount Moriah AME Church made an architectural impression on influential members of the Second Episcopal District (which includes Baltimore and Washington, DC), particularly, James A. Handy and Bishop Daniel A. Payne.

African American religious communities in Washington, DC consistently engaged in building projects during the 1870s. One month after St. Augustine's dedication, St. Luke's Episcopal Church had groundbreaking services to commence the construction of their church,

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, "Capsule Summary."

<sup>157</sup> An additional similarity with Metropolitan AME Church is that both structures galleries are supported with cast iron columns. Both churches also share the same brick bonding technique, American Bonding.

<sup>158</sup> LD Aldridge, "Maryland (Correspondence)," 1 April 1897, *Christian Recorder*, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: August 2, 2015).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

located a Fifteenth and Church Streets, NW. St. Luke's Episcopal Church became a major coordinate of the African American community that spanned the U Street corridor, south to the M Street urban artery. (Figure 2.10) This structure maintains the distinction of being the earliest public structure designed by one of the city's earliest successful African American builder-architects. The 1979 Historic American Building Survey offers this description for its architectural character:

Anglican [E]cclesiologists, who greatly influenced the probable designers, Rev. Alexander Crummell and Calvin T.S. Brent, preferred the honesty and simplicity of the Early English Gothic Style, which was particularly effective in small parish churches... While on the one hand St. Luke's displays the ruggedness and simplicity of the Early English Gothic concept, its rigid exterior symmetry does not create the picturesqueness usually associated with the style. Also the precisely cut alternating red and tan limestone voussoirs are more akin to Ruskinian tradition than the Ecclesiological tradition of randomly laid stone.<sup>160</sup>

The Potomac Bluestone façade and massive stone buttresses emphasize the two-story structure's solid mass. H.F. Gernhardt's stained-glass windows pierce the stone walls and lighten the visual weight of the structure, which included a basement as well. According to architectural historian, Nancy Schwartz, Calvin Brent, Washington, D.C.'s earliest documented African American practicing builder, apprenticed with the architectural firm of Plowman and Weightman around 1873.<sup>161</sup> Dedicated in June of 1876, St. Luke's Episcopal Church stands as Brent's first commission and signaled the beginning of his work with church architecture during the 1880s.

One month after St. Luke's 1876 consecration, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, a historically black congregation in the largely African American community of Georgetown, laid a limestone cornerstone for their new religious home. (Figure 2.11) Founded as early as 1816 out of protesting racial segregation, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church is one of the oldest African

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<sup>160</sup> Harrison M. Ethridge, "Historical American Building Survey, HABS No. DC 359, St. Luke's Episcopal Church," Historical American Building Survey Database, Department of the Interior, Library of Congress, 6.

<sup>161</sup> Nancy Schwartz, "Calvin Brent Stowe," *African American Architects: a Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*, Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57.

American religious congregations in the federal city limits. While the historical record remains silent on the identity of the builder or architect, the current church was erected between 1876 and 1884. The pressed-brick structure has a shallow, flat façade, articulated by sets of elongated lancet stained glass windows and red sandstone accents.<sup>162</sup> In fact, architectural historian Daniel D. Reiff only uses the term Gothic to describe the architectural detailing and ornamentation of the exterior.<sup>163</sup> The dense massing reinforced by the white stone used to articulate the roofline communicated the congregation's permanence.

Both Mt. Zion Church and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church have horse-shoe galleries that are supported by iron columns. In the case of Mt. Zion, the columns, that measure over seven feet in height, are stained dark brown and completed with capitals of palm leaves.<sup>164</sup> Mt. Zion and Metropolitan both have ornate wooden pews with volutes at the arm and a wooden lancet panel below to add dimension and visual variety.<sup>165</sup> Finally, akin to St. Like's Episcopal Church, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and Mt. Zion United Methodist commissioned the renowned stained-glass artist H.F. Gernhardt to create jewel-toned windows to reinforce a Gothic Revival decorative program.

The use of Gothic Revival architectural vocabularies in the case of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church and other ecclesiastical structures also represents a major contribution by the Protestant Evangelical denominations to the American architectural landscape. In Brian Zugay's 2004 dissertation entitled, "Toward a 'New Era' in Church Building: Architectural Reforms in

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<sup>162</sup> Fitzpatrick & Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital*, (New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, 2001) 201-202.

<sup>163</sup> Daniel D. Reiff, Historical American Building Survey, HABS No. DC 242, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church," Historical American Building Survey Database, Department of the Interior, Library of Congress, 7.

<sup>164</sup> Daniel D. Reiff, Historical American Building Survey , HABS No. DC 242, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church," Historical American Building Survey Database, Department of the Interior, Library of Congress, 14.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

American Protestantism in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries,” the author explores the emergence of denominational organizations that encouraged and influenced construction activity across the nation. Emphasizing the importance of church extension agencies as an organizational response to material conditions, Zugay asserts:

[The Evangelical Churches] came to recognize church building as materially and strategically important for the success of their individual missionary and evangelical enterprises, and, therefore, deemed them worthy of Church-wide support...Methodist and Baptist, particularly, were quite aware of their poor reputation as church-builders and their lack of firm building principles—especially compared to the liturgical Protestant Episcopal Church which was engaged in an active gothic-revival building program--, and they sought to express their growing ascendancy in American society and religious life, as well as attract more members, by building better churches.<sup>166</sup>

In fact, this description of denominational architectural activity accurately reflects the history of the A.M.E. Church during the early twentieth century. Akin to Zugay’s subjects, the A.M.E. church also had an internal organization responsible for denominational expansion.<sup>167</sup> Several denominational sources also note that John Lankford served as Supervising Architect for the A.M.E. Church. In this capacity, he drafted designs for Metropolitan’s 1920s renovations.<sup>168</sup>

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church played a prominent role in the early development of the denomination’s architectural character. Julian Pleasant’s 1992 dissertation attempts to analyze A.M.E. fine arts aesthetics as a reflection of liturgical practice. Pleasant also proposes three cathedral-like structures as anchors in this nineteenth century tradition: Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, “Mother” Bethel A.M.E. Church (1891, Philadelphia, PA) and Emanuel A.M.E. Church

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<sup>166</sup> Brian Zugay, “Towards a ‘New Era’ in Church Building: Architectural Reform in American Protestantism in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2004), 4.

<sup>167</sup> A number of Scurlock studio A.M.E. institutional group portraits document the existence of the Church Extension Department.

<sup>168</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2.*, (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 231. According to the Commission on Fine Art publication, John Lankford may have been employed by this board, although no official contract has been found.

(1891, Charleston, SC).<sup>169</sup> This case study aims to build upon the scholarship of Julian Pleasant and Julius H. Bailey by tracing the stylistic pattern initiated by Metropolitan AME Church. The A.M.E. denomination remained on par with their mainstream Methodist Episcopal brethren in organizationally responding to the architectural needs of the denomination. Metropolitan's building type, the auditorium type church, reflects the influence of Evangelicalism.<sup>170</sup> Morsell designed the sacred space to enable lines of sight and audible clarity, making it an ideal space for religious conversion or ideological debate.<sup>171</sup> In *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History*, Loveland and Wheeler establish the historical context for this building type. They note "...the auditorium church building often comprised more than a 'churchly' exterior and an opulent audience room. In many cases, it was a multipurpose facility designed to bring working-class and poor people under the influence of the gospel, as well as to nurture a predominantly middle- and upper-class congregation."<sup>172</sup>

By the 1880s, the auditorium-style church plan evolved into a loose formula of a main auditorium sanctuary accompanied by a second-story gallery, curved seating with inclined floors in some cases, and a large platform for the pulpit.<sup>173</sup> Washington, D.C. architects like Samuel T.G. Morsell had the early example of the Robert Mill's First Baptist Church (1818) as a template model for an auditorium style church within 50 miles of their doorstep in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1882, as Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was under construction, Adolph Cluss designed the Universalist Church of Our Fathers. Located a few blocks from Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and L Street, NW, the Universalist Church was a one story structure that furthered

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<sup>169</sup> Julian S. Pleasant, "The Arts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as Viewed in the architecture, music and liturgy of the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. Diss., Ohio University, 1992).

<sup>170</sup> Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History*. (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2003). 33, 44-45.

<sup>171</sup> The wide array of activities that took place in Metropolitan A.M.E. Church necessitated the use of an auditorium style structure.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

adapted the auditorium form to a larger amphitheater design that featured more seating configured to radiate from the pulpit. Metropolitan's configuration confirms the increasing popularity of oratorical addresses and vocal performances as evidenced by the proliferation of the auditorium style church in the capital.

Metropolitan A.M.E. was an early material response to an architectural discourse that had developed over the pages of the *Christian Recorder* between 1861 and 1896. The recent scholarship on the A.M.E. denomination by Julius H. Bailey contextualizes the impact of the *Christian Recorder* as space for the exchange and propagation of ideologies and cultural styles. In his book, *Race Patriotism: Protest and Print Culture in the A.M.E. Church*, Bailey analyzes the *Christian Recorder* as "discursive space" where notions about African American identity were shaped across a vast readership, which was estimated to be a half a million at the close of the nineteenth century.<sup>174</sup> Bailey contends:

From the early struggles of the A.M.E. periodicals, the *Christian Recorder* emerged as a discursive space in which contributors debated and discussed how to best uplift the race. With Benjamin T. Tanner at its helm, the newspaper revived the protest tradition. The *Christian Recorder* would provide a distinctive type of historical writing in which narratives were created, interrupted and reframed at varied points with an eye toward shaping the future trajectory of the race and denomination.<sup>175</sup>

Under the leadership of Bishop Tanner (the father of artist, Henry Ossawa Tanner) from 1868 to 1884, the *Christian Recorder* also aimed to shape the aesthetic and architectural taste of subscribers.

During the 1860s and the first half of the 1870s, the *Christian Recorder* primarily republished commentaries on European architecture from other Protestant religious publications such as *Presbyterian Quarterly Review* and *Lutheran and Missionary*. For instance, Protestant

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<sup>174</sup> Julius H. Bailey, *Race Patriotism: Protest and Print Culture in the AME Church*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 23 & xvi.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

Episcopal minister the Rev. C.C. Tiffany reflected on Christian church architecture, concluding, “The Gothic style is churchly in all its forms.”<sup>176</sup> Indicative of the tone of architectural writing published in this newspaper, Tiffany even offered suggestions concerning the specification of a Protestant church informed by medieval architecture:

Protestant Christianity, with its modifications of medieval Christianity, demands modification of medieval architecture to adapt it to its wants and to make it the adequate expression of its nature, and I think the best way to determine what that modification must be is to look at those features of its life and worship ... There should be a diminution in the size of churches, and the removal of columns, or the placing of them in the form of pilasters against the walls. We should retain a well defined chancel. The pulpit, the symbol of prophecy, should stand forth conspicuous. The construction of desks and seats, which are merely furniture, should be left to the taste of the people. Decoration has its place. A church needs color as well as form. Paint ought to be seen to be paint. The decoration should not be the decoration of a ball room: should not express the fineness of society, nor the rivalry of ambitious congregations. The “dim religious light” is apt to issue from a dim religious life. Let the windows of your churches glow with the faces and forms of the Apostles, not merely for aesthetic effect, but as memorials of your faith.<sup>177</sup>

The author describes a church architecture that responds to the practical needs of the congregation. Furthermore, Tiffany reinforces ideas concerning decorative programs in sacred space. In this way, Tanner and other leaders of the A.M.E. church aimed to influence the architectural character of a religious body that was rapidly expanding. The support of the Medieval Revival styles demonstrates an interest in solidarity with or perhaps a reinterpretation of broader Methodist trends. Three years later, Millie Jones, a frequent contributor to the *Christian Recorder*, pondered the role of visual trademarks or symbols in expressing identity in her brief essay, “Our Trademark.” Citing the legibility of hieroglyphs from “the Indian race,” and the “Gothic cathedral,” Jones encourages the reader to consider what visual and material mark

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<sup>176</sup> Rev. C. C. Tiffany, “Church Architecture,” *Christian Recorder*, 25 Mar 1875, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed March 20, 2015).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.



will be associated with the African American race.<sup>178</sup> Metropolitan AME Church is the result of a rich architectural discourse of revival architecture and Classical Black Nationalism ideologies.

### **From Mission to Cathedral: the Fundraising and Construction Years (1876-1886)**

In the months following Israel Bethel's decision to leave the A.M.E. denomination, Union Bethel began to petition for the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church project. The congregation demolished the old church in July 1881 and laid the cornerstone for the new edifice in October. The building committee ledger reflects that by August 1881, \$5,683 had been paid to the architect, Samuel T.G. Morsell, for plans, permits and for the demolition and removal of materials from the old church.<sup>179</sup> Institutional correspondence and the *Christian Recorder* document the fundraising efforts, promoted by A.M.E. bishops and anchored by the local financial activities of the Baltimore Conference and the DC area congregations. In 1878, one of the earliest references to Metropolitan Church was made:

The members of the Metropolitan Mission in Washington, have made an appeal to the sister churches and friends for aid. They acknowledge the prompt response of Ebenezer Church in Baltimore, for the first two dollars sent to aid them in their struggle... We are but a handful, and need the sympathy and aid of the churches... Let each pastor but ask the people for the small sum required and there will be a hearty response.<sup>180</sup>

This passage outlines the fundraising strategy implemented over the next ten years. The construction was financed through a slow stream of denominational fundraising from across the

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<sup>178</sup> Millie Jones "Our Trademark," *Christian Recorder*, 19 Sept 1878, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: March 19, 2015). In this essay, the author uses trademark as a synonym for legacy or tradition.

<sup>179</sup> Building Committee Ledger, "Washington DC, August 1881," 2, Metropolitan AME Church papers, 4-51, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>180</sup> Contributor identified as C. "The First Noble Responses to the Call for Aid I The Cause of the Metropolitan Church and Mission - the Work To Be Done and The Demands Of The Church," *Christian Recorder*, 2 May 1878, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: May 24, 2015).

nation alongside generous donations from the local Washington, D.C. communities and denominational leaders.

In addition to mobilizing funds through a series of financial appeals published in the *Christian Recorder*, the A.M.E. bishops exhibited a vested interest by appointing a pastor who could ensure the completion of this project. The dramatic exit of the District of Columbia's denominational mother church, Israel Bethel AME Church, garnered attention in the press.<sup>181</sup> In an effort to avert pastoral issues, the A.M.E. bishops began strategically selecting pastors with a specific set of attributes to guide this congregation and the architectural enterprise. In February 1880, Bishop Daniel Payne penned two letters to New Jersey pastor, John W. Stevenson, urging him to consider the pastorate at Metropolitan. Demonstrating the Episcopacy's interest, Payne urged Stevenson with these words: "Bishop Brown in a letter from Marion, S.C., makes a formal request for your transfer to the Baltimore Annual Conference, and desires you to be present on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April in Baltimore. Pack up and go, and build a house for God in Washington. The need of a more commodious and beautiful house of worship in that end of the city is greatly felt by all who can see and think on the subject."<sup>182</sup> Bishop Payne augmented his "irregular" recommendation by suggesting the Rev. Stevenson report to the Second District's bishop a month prior to the commencement of his appointment.<sup>183</sup>

Although the project was especially near to Bishop Daniel Payne and his legacy, as evidenced in his selection to deliver the sermon at the church's 1886 dedicatory services, Metropolitan embodied the aspirations of the majority of bishops. One month after Payne's 1880

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<sup>181</sup> Bishop Jabez P. Campbell, "Bishop Campbell Vs. Israel Church," *Christian Recorder*, 29 Oct 1874. When the *National Republican* reported on the disagreement, the presiding Bishop of the Second Episcopal District, published an open letter in the *Christian Recorder*, entitled, "Bishop Campbell vs. Israel Church," to the Editor of the *National Republican*.

<sup>182</sup> Bishop Daniel Payne, Correspondence to J. W Stevenson, "An Address from Union Bethel A.M.E. Church" 3, Simms Family Papers, 2-37, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>183</sup> Bishop John M. Brown, Correspondence to J.W. Stevenson, "An Address from Union Bethel A.M.E. Church" 4, Simms Family Papers, 2-37, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

letter, the eleventh A.M.E. bishop, John Mifflin Brown, wrote a detailed letter to Metropolitan's new pastor, offering eleven points of advice. After praising the previous pastors who augmented the membership and eliminated Union Bethel Church's debt, Bishop Brown puts forth a description of the host congregation and outlines pastoral expectations, stating:

...4. Union Bethel has a large congregation of fourteen hundred, and one of the most intelligent and pious in the District of Columbia...6. There is not a church in the connection where there are so many teachers and educated young persons tha[t] are found there and I believe fully enthused with the idea of building a new church. You may find a few who think the wait policy is best, but I want a new church and nine-tenths of the people in that church...9. There is plenty of money in Washington; it only requires a money-hunter, like you to find it.<sup>184</sup>

Bishop Brown's emphatic words situate the construction project as an extension of denominational expansion. Furthermore, the congregation sought to cement the cultural intellectual heritage that would make the A.M.E. denomination the embodiment of racial progress.

This desire expressed by Bishops Payne and Brown must be understood in the larger context of the ecclesiastical construction that dominated the late nineteenth century. Architectural historians such as Jeanne Halgren Kilde, Brian Zugay and Ryan K. Smith have documented the denominational efforts in both Protestant and Catholic religious communities.<sup>185</sup> The *Christian Recorder* documents the material expansion of the African American church as it covered dedicatory services for a variety of black denominations. As a leader in the African American denominational expansion, the A.M.E. Church also engaged in institution building on a national

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<sup>184</sup> Bishop John M. Brown, Correspondence to J.W. Stevenson, "An Address from Union Bethel A.M.E. Church" 4, Simms Family Papers, 2-37, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. The original source only contained excerpts of Bishop Brown's letter.

<sup>185</sup> Architectural studies that examine the popularity of Gothic Revival styles across denominational architectural practices include Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Brian Zugay, "Towards a "new era" in church building: architectural reform in American Protestantism in the nineteenth and early-twentieth Centuries," (Ph.D. Diss., Brown University, 2004); Ryan K. Smith, *Gothic Arches, Latin Crosses: Anti-Catholicism and American Church Designs in the Nineteenth Century*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

level as evidenced in the *Christian Recorder*. After the Civil War, the denomination opened churches in the southern and in western regions of the country. As the denomination grew in the 1870s, the organ began to report on all phases of the construction of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church from the laying of the cornerstone to the dedication services for public spaces in the new structure.<sup>186</sup> The promotion and protection of the idea of a national, connectional church by the presiding bishops later spawned the late twentieth century myth that the A.M.E. denomination is financially obligated to maintain the structure.<sup>187</sup>

In the early months of the 1880s, the minds behind Metropolitan A.M.E. Church advanced their fundraising efforts by providing the *Christian Recorder* subscribers with an architectural and interior description intended to define their concept of a national church. The article, entitled “The Metropolitan Church: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, DC—The New Enterprise of Building a Monumental Church” was published in the January 15, 1880 edition of the denominational organ. This description aimed to make tangible the investment A.M.E. leaders were requesting.<sup>188</sup> The announcement stated the following:

The building is to be 74 x 110 feet with rear addition of 17 x 62 feet. Transept 51 x 54 feet, main tower, 28 x 28 and 216 feet high. The spires to be metal coverings, the first 111 feet high, the second 46 feet high; the structure will be faced with granite stone; the interior—the first story will be 16 feet 9 inches ceiling. This divided—first lecture room in main containing 560 seats; back of it a dining hall or ladies reception room 68 X 17 feet: in the rear of this two ladies' parlors connected by glass partitions to the hall the same connected to the lecture room by glass partitions, all of which can be thrown up so as to open the whole body of the first floor into one room. Behind these parlors, are kitchen lockers, closets and all modern culinary arrangements for entertainment for church purposes. Above this kitchen department, is committee rooms and toilet rooms for ladies. On the transept part is the Sunday School, seating 264 children, two

<sup>186</sup> This was ascertained from searching for dedication services and new churches in *Christian Recorder*, published between 1861 and 1886, on the American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> Ambassador Horace Dawson, editor, “Introduction,” Briefing Book Respecting Metropolitan AME Church, Washington DC, 1996, Collection of Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey, Washington, DC.

<sup>188</sup> Building Committee Ledger, “Washington DC, August 1881,” Metropolitan AME Church papers, 4-51, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University. The author of this submission was not identified, but the information corresponds with the data accumulated by the building committee.

library parts and an infant class room seating 180 children. These are all arranged so as to connect with the main lecture room by glass partitions to be thrown up or down at pleasure, so as to throw them into one audience room.

Although the actual dimensions are 80 x 120 feet, the monumentality of the church permeates this description. In addition to emphasizing the ground level hall's capacity, the description reflects attention to design space to meet the varied functions of the congregation. In the visual and written record of the space as built, there is no evidence of movable glass partitions.<sup>189</sup> The actual structure designated space for a kitchen and two small pantries. Two rooms, a parlor and nursery, were located just before the entrance of the lower auditorium.<sup>190</sup>

This 1880 description of Metropolitan AME Church characterizes a modern multipurpose space that differs greatly from the 1886 outcome. Perhaps because of financial constraints, Metropolitan AME Church eliminates and consolidates spaces that were proposed in the *Christian Recorder*. The sanctuary was envisioned as follows:

On the second floor the main auditorium seats 691. The transept, connecting by glass partitions, seats two hundred and forty six. The gallery over the front will contain eighty-four seats. The orchestra, situated in the rear of the pulpit with organ, seats sixty person. At each side are large committee rooms and toilet rooms for choir and on one side, pastor a study with committee and classrooms. Immediately over the transept is an additional one prepared for the young men's Christian Association rooms and library. Connected with this is the Training School for girls, where they will be taught the practical duties of life, with all the appliances of a thorough training in homes and domestic success. This is a specialty of this church work. There are five entrances three public and two private, with heating and lighting, water and all conveniences of modern times. The estimated cost is \$65,000. General seating capacity-Lecture room first story

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<sup>189</sup> In the late twentieth century, the congregation had partitions installed to facilitate the unified worship of the modern Sunday school and the divided classroom instruction model.

<sup>190</sup> Preliminary descriptions of these spaces suggested the north wall of these rooms were to be replaced with glass partition that would be retractable to extend the lower auditorium. The parlor became the Robert L. Pruitt Conference room in the 2000s. The nursery was a smaller space with two smaller rooms. By the late twentieth century, the nursery was converted into administrative offices for the church.

560; transept, 264; infant school, 180; total, 1,004. Main Auditorium, second story, 691; transept, 264; gallery, 84; orchestra, 60; total, 2,103.<sup>191</sup>

This ambitious proposal was firmly situated in Methodist Episcopal architectural developments of the Akron or Sunday School Plan. In 1867, Lewis Miller, educator, and Jacob Snyder, an architect, developed an architectural style that would accommodate a multitude of partitioned dedicated rooms for classes.<sup>192</sup> Morsell's application of this model in the lower auditorium, as opposed to the sanctuary, demonstrates an interest in reflecting Methodist Episcopal design. The second level was reduced to an auditorium with space for a pastoral office and possibly a small committee room.<sup>193</sup> This proposal also suggested that space above the transept or gallery level would house YMCA and library facilities; this component was also removed from the actual design. The 1880 architectural advertisement provided an inventory-like account of the A.M.E. building and functioned to further an architectural design discourse among a nationwide religious community that potentially functioned to standardize space across the denomination.<sup>194</sup> It also demonstrated to the larger readership the integral role the A.M.E. Church served in materializing African American self-determination and influencing architectural style in the African American community.

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<sup>191</sup> Unidentified author, "The Metropolitan Church: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, DC—The New Enterprise of Building a Monumental Church," *Christian Recorder*, 15 Jan 1880, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 23, 2015).

<sup>192</sup> Herbert F. Evans, "The Sunday School Building and Its Equipment," *The Biblical World*, Vol. 44 (Sept. 1914): 155, JSTOR, (accessed: August 1, 2015). For more information on the Akron Plan see: Marion Lawrence, "The Akron Plan—Its Genesis, History and Development," *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (n.p.: 1914); James E. Kirby, Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe, "Sunday School for All, 1866-1915," *The Methodist*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 212-217; James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations*, (1964), (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003); Ted Campbell, "Methodist Ecclesiologies and Methodist Sacred Spaces," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed., (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007).

<sup>193</sup> By the 1990s, the congregation installed an elevator across from the pastoral study. Since there are no remaining plans for original structure, it is hard to determine how this space was configured.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* The following quote demonstrates how plans were distributed, thus furthering an architectural discourse in the denomination: "That the connection may have an idea of the character of the building to be erected, the following is published for their information, and it is earnestly hoped that each member of the connection, and friend of the cause, will contribute to the enterprise. Rev. R.H. Cain has had the drawings photographed, and will present them to contributors as a memento of their contributions for this cause."

As fundraising efforts intensified during construction, denominational leaders confronted Pastor John W. Stevenson for employing abnormal tactics to meet the financial obligations. After exerting pressure on class leaders to closely monitor class members' contributions, the Rev. Stevenson was accused of forcing class leaders who would not comply to draft letters expressing their allegiance to Pastor Stevenson and publicly repent before the congregation.<sup>195</sup> Taking ownership over the vision to erect Metropolitan, Metropolitan's leading lay leader, John A. Simms, Sr. petitioned for Stevenson's removal as a result of this type of inappropriate activity seven months before the laying of the cornerstone.<sup>196</sup> By 1882, the public pastoral issues at Metropolitan alongside incessant requests for funds toward church building created public debate concerning the denomination's building program.<sup>197</sup>

The cornerstone laying services initiated the first of several ritualized services to celebrate and christen the space for its multifaceted use. This ceremony also served as a way to advertise to the local and the national community the epic efforts unfolding in the nation's capital. These public performances shaped the dominant narrative concerning the self-determination exhibited by this religious community. Thus, offering anyone the chance to contribute to this

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<sup>195</sup>William T. Peel, Correspondence to Pastor Stevenson, 14 Sept 1880, "An Address from Union Bethel A.M.E. Church" 5, Simms Family Papers, 2-37, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. For instance, one example included in a appeal for Stevenson's removal, read as follows: "...I pledge myself before God and his angels that I will be true to the church, to my class, true to my pastor in private and in public, and that I will not be found talking myself nor permit others to talk to me against him, his plans, nor the church, that but that I will be ever true and faithful."

<sup>196</sup> Simms supported by two hundred and forty eight signatures.

<sup>197</sup> Rev. W.L. Hunter, "Another Strange Thing under the Sun," *Christian Recorder*, 23 February 1882, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 19, 2015). In the early months of 1882, Brooklyn area minister, the Rev. W.L. Hunter posed a question to the bishops of the A.M.E. denomination, inquiring why funds were being solicited for Union Bethel as opposed to Metropolitan, as approved by the General Conference. He also called for the publication of amounts collected from each district.; Benjamin T. Tanner and J.C. Embry, "In the Matter of Metropolitan, Washington, DC, 10/18/1882" *Christian Recorder*, 2 Nov 1882, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: Jan 20, 2015). By the fall, the *Christian Recorder* directly addressed those request by reporting on "the effort that [was] being made to save it to the connection," and began listing contributions to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.

monument to the race, the rhetoric of racial advancement escalated two years later with these words:

...allow us to express the opinion that if it were possible for our ministers and people to look upon this really cathedral-like structure, there would be no drawing back from transmitting at once the much craved ONE DOLLAR. Not only is it creditable to the Church, but the whole race can point to it with pride, especially when it is considered that Negro money not only paid for it, but Negro brain and push engineered it through. The only part any white person took in it was as an employee. Of course, there is nothing, possibly, very exceptional in this; yet a man likes to know that he can do whatever his neighbor does; and as it is with the individual, so is it with a class. The new structure, we admit, is a colossal one; but if any be inclined to the opinion that, all things considered, it is too much so, we beg anyone to consider that there is to be a tomorrow in our career as a church and as a people. Nor will that tomorrow be as today as it relates to us.<sup>198</sup>

The leaders of this construction initiative orchestrated a cornerstone service that would highlight the symbolic significance of this new structure. The advertising handbill chronicles how the denomination maintained a prominent presence as the leaders of the Baltimore Conference alongside Bishops delivered addresses. (Figure 2.12)

The Masonic rituals at the core of the cornerstone service reflect compliance to a broader tradition but, more importantly, inaugurated a special relationship with fraternal organizations. In 1825, ten free African American men founded the Grand Masonic Lodge of the District of Columbia.<sup>199</sup> This service represented the contribution of these historic communities, the Prince Hall Masons and early A.M.E. congregations in Washington, D.C., in the institutional and architectural advancement of African Americans. During the service, trustees and church officers entrusted with the custodial responsibilities of the property then presented the seventeen articles

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<sup>198</sup> Pastor James Handy and John A. Simms, "The New Union Bethel," *Christian Recorder*, 1 Mar 1883, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: Jan 20, 2015).

<sup>199</sup> Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology, 300 Years of African American History*, (Hoboken: J. Wiley, 2005), 28.



to be placed in the cornerstone to the Treasurer of the Grand Lodge.<sup>200</sup> Beginning with a copy of the Bible, the first eight items consisted of denominational literature like the A.M.E. *Discipline* and publications supported by African American communities such as the *Christian Recorder*, the *Child's Recorder*, *People's Advocate of the New South* and the *National Republican*.<sup>201</sup> The next three articles also documented the spirit of the time. As if to make a textual connection, a message from the President of the United States of America was placed alongside a program outlining the cornerstone proceedings and a list containing the names of the Building Committee, the pastor and officers of Union Bethel.<sup>202</sup> Using material artifacts as historic symbols, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church began its enduring association with the President of the United States of America and influential civic leaders.

The last items deposited in the cornerstone are a series of coins offered by four women and one man, evoking the organizational force of women in financially supporting the project. While these women were more than likely leaders, the women selected were relatives of building committee members John A. Simms and Henry Gray. The stand-alone contributor without evident familial affiliation was Lucy Fowler.<sup>203</sup> These women represented a major force in fundraising efforts, which contributed hundreds of dollars per year toward the construction of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, as evidenced by the Ladies Sinking Fund National Freedman's

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> John A. Simms and Building Committee, "Articles placed in the Corner-stone of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C. by the Board of Trustees," Simms Family Papers, 2-46, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> "Membership Roster," Simms Family Papers, 1-28, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; "Dollar Money Record" *Christian Recorder*, 17 Jul 1873, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015). A thorough examination of the early church roster resulted in no record of Fowler in Union Bethel's first 150 members; "Dollar Money Record," *Christian Recorder*, 24 Jul 1873, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015). In July 1873, Fowler's consistent contribution is documented in the Dollar Money Record column of the *Christian Recorder*.

Savings and Trust Company Deposit Book.<sup>204</sup> These types of donations were necessary to the structure's completion as the project was plagued with financial issues. The placement of these items concluded the Masonic rites and was followed by a financial collection among the attendees. As a fundraising opportunity, the handbill advertised the use of Bethel Hall as a site for entertaining attendees. Dinners served at a "moderate price" were available for purchase before and after the services.<sup>205</sup> The cornerstone ceremony day concluded with a five hour "promenade" or formal ball, where a ten cent admission fee was charged.<sup>206</sup>

In the months and years after the cornerstone laying, the A.M.E. bishops pursued an appeal campaign published in the *Christian Recorder* between 1882 and 1886. As explicitly stated in the text, these requests were intended to be read aloud before AME congregations. The first solicitation was made on behalf of all fourteen of the A.M.E. bishops in a letter entitled, "An Appeal from the Bishops to the Ministries, Members and Friends of the A.M.E. Church," published in the first edition of the *Christian Recorder* in 1882. After outlining the cost and structural dimensions, the denominational leaders asserted:

As said before we have been hindered by false friends. ... This house is to be one which will do honor to our race and the cause of our Divine Master. It is to be the Metropolitan church of our connection, and when completed will give us a standing and position in Washington which we have never had before, and it will bring honor and glory to God, who demands the best, and not the meanest offering of his people... And in order to encourage you we take great pleasure in saying that the walls of the representative church are now rapidly going up and \$10.00 are needed immediately. You will please, therefore make an effort at once and raise your amount and forward it to the above address. At the roll-call of each annual conference in the connection this question will be asked by the

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<sup>204</sup> Deposit Book, No. 8080, 1871-1883, Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 2-32, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2*. (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988) 219-220. The women of the church also raised enough money to purchase of lamps, gallery seating and the altar.

<sup>205</sup> "Programme of Exercises for the Laying of the Cornerstone, 10/3/1881," Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 6-71, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

presiding Bishop: “have you raised your amount according to the appeal from the Bishops , for the Metropolitan church at Washington: if not why?” Every brother is expected to do his whole duty, Done at the Episcopal rooms, Washington, D.C., December 13, 1881.<sup>207</sup>

This appeal, varied in its tone, intended to make three statements regarding the denominational obligation to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. In addition to soliciting funds, material specifications such as cost and dimension and the intended cultural significance and symbolism of this space emphasized the Episcopacy’s central concerns. The halt of construction between 1883 and early 1885 because of failure to make contractual payments necessitated this appeal.<sup>208</sup> In this correspondence, the authors demonstrate an attention to the significance of site and the symbolic potential behind such an architectural gesture. This appeal was purportedly written in the Episcopal Rooms of Washington, Washington, D.C.<sup>209</sup>

The Episcopal Rooms represented a spatial response to a religious community claiming space. These rooms provided an arena to develop and articulate A.M.E. edicts, histories and in some cases, myths. Early mentions of Episcopal Rooms in Washington, D.C. included no reference to the specific location of these spaces. By 1887, the Episcopal Rooms of the African Methodist Episcopal Church were located at 1434 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, D.C.<sup>210</sup> In

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<sup>207</sup> Bishops Daniel Payne, Alexander Wayman, et al. ““An Appeal from the Bishops to the Ministries, Members and Friends of the A.M.E. Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 12 Jan 1882, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 21, 2015).

<sup>208</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet), Published through the Church, (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005) 9,2,15.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid; Unidentified Author, “Episcopal Rooms,” *Christian Recorder*, 30 November 1876, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 21, 2015). As early as 1876, the *Christian Recorder* relayed the request from the manager of the denominational offices in Philadelphia for “two front rooms on the second floor of our Publication Department for the Bishop’s Headquarters.”

<sup>210</sup> Committee of Arrangements (Bishops Brown, Ward, Turner Disney and Arnett), “Centennial of the African Methodist Episcopal Church—Episcopal Rooms of the African Methodist Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 14 April 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 20, 2015). There is very little information on this space in archival holdings, but it my conjecture that the history of A.M.E. Episcopal Rooms in Washington, D.C. would be firmly situated in a shared interest in having official denominational representation in the nation’s capitol. There is no archival evidence that AME Bishops used any space in Metropolitan AME as Episcopal Rooms. Building on the

addition to attending to the everyday need of the religious body, the bishops ensured that space was created to facilitate the activities that would bolster and cement the legacy of the A.M.E. Church. In fact, the completion of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church ensured the denomination would have a permanent national stage to host religious and community rituals. Several individual appeals delivered by Bishop Daniel Payne and later Bishop Richard Cain followed this Episcopal solicitation and complimented efforts of local clergy led by Union Bethel's new pastor, and Second District veteran, the Rev. James A. Handy.<sup>211</sup> Handy would go on to be a substantial contributor, eventually donating \$12,675.<sup>212</sup> Pastor Handy's investment represents the extent of individual African American economic capital during this period. It further illustrates the value of investing in materials to communicate notions of communal identity.

Washington's Episcopal Rooms may have been an early example of a network of "sumptuous quarters," always available to bishops for denominational business.<sup>213</sup> In January of 1876, six bishops wrote a letter that attempted to justify the financial obligations they had established for denominational expansion. From this authoritative arena of the Episcopal Rooms, these denominational heads asserted:

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tradition of A.M.E. bishops maintaining administrative presence in the nation's capitol, by the 1910s, the denomination purchased an attached a three-story brick office building in the western portion of the Shaw neighborhood. Located at 1541 Fourteenth Street, NW, the administrative structure would stand block from the AME's Methodist brethren at John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion in the sixteen hundred block of Fourteenth Street. Currently, Episcopal Administrative offices are located the Second District's Episcopal office at 1134 11th Street, NW, Suite 300. The denomination owns this property and houses other branches of the church such as the Women's Missionary Society.

<sup>211</sup> Bishop Richard Cain, "An Open Letter to the Right Rev. Bishop D. A. Payne, D. D.," *Christian Recorder*, 19 February 1885, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: May 25, 2015); Rev. James Handy, "The Metropolitan AME Church, Washington," *Christian Recorder*, 12 October 1882, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 20, 2015).

<sup>212</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, *167th Anniversary: Metropolitan AME Church* (Booklet). Published through the Church, (Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2005), 22-23.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

We think a careful review of the work which God seems to have committed to our hands will convince you of the necessity of this appeal. We need more schools and academics for our children; churches are to be built in places where the gospel is only occasionally of the times demand that we should establish and support asylums for our orphans, and more especially the aged fathers and mothers of our race. By doing this we show to the world at large that we are trying to help ourselves. We must not depend too much upon the help of others. If we do all in our own power we may rest assured that others will give us the helping hand... The best of our race are rapidly coming to the conclusion that the A.M.E. Church is a success and a monument to the memory of the race, to which they can point with exultant pride. We know our needs as no friend, not a member of our church can know. The work we wish to accomplish is immense! A race long depressed and oppressed is to be lifted up, and what instrumentality is more potential than the church of our choice! But can we succeed without a combined effort? "In union there is strength," and without this there is no success.<sup>214</sup>

These leading minds of African Methodism clearly situated their efforts in the rhetoric of racial advancement, further developed through institutional building projects such as Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, "Mother" Bethel in Philadelphia and Morris Brown College in Atlanta.<sup>215</sup>

From its completion through the first quarter of the early twentieth century, Metropolitan was the largest African-American-owned property in the District of Columbia. Large seating capacity and its exterior chromatic interplay are distinguishing facets of Metropolitan A.M.E.

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<sup>214</sup> Bishops Payne, Wayman, Campbell, Shorter, Ward and Brown, "Episcopal Rooms, Washington, D.C.," *Christian Recorder*, 20 Jan 1876, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 20, 2015).

<sup>215</sup> Hon. D.A. Straker, "A Visit to Morris Brown College Building—The Work of Rev. W.J. Gaines, D.D.," *Christian Recorder*, 19 Mar 1885, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 20, 2015).; Committee of Arrangements (Bishops Brown, Ward, Turner Disney and Arnett), "Centennial of the African Methodist Episcopal Church—Episcopal Rooms of the African Methodist Church," *Christian Recorder*, 14 April 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: January 20, 2015). Reinforcing historical narratives and the sensationalism of myth, the Bishops commemorated the early act of resistance and mobilization with these words: "AND WHEREAS, This is the most decisive act of the religious colored people in the United States, and we know of none like it of the descendants of African in the world; if we except the Resolve of the Haitians under Toussaint, Christopher, Petioun and Boyer. These men were to Haiti and San Domingo, in a civil and political sense, what Allen, Jones... and others were to the colored Christian of Americas; their act was manhood, freedom, and manhood Christianity. We must fully recognize their action a success ... To resist oppression in church or State is manly. Toussaint and Allen are by us honored, revered and loved. ... It is therefore proper and right that we should commemorate an event so important and so full of interest to us as a race..." This passage typifies the tone of the agenda A.M.E. leaders put forth from official administrative positions.

church's Victorian Gothic style.<sup>216</sup> In addition to the polychromatic variety established by the granite ornamentation, the external walls were constructed using the common bond technique, which creates a pattern that echoes the pronounced white accents at each register against the red brick.<sup>217</sup> The two-story brick structure measures 80 feet wide x 120 feet deep and originally included an unfinished basement.<sup>218</sup> The second story sanctuary that seats almost 2,500 people dominates this structure.<sup>219</sup> Morsell's adoption of the auditorium style sanctuary that gained increasing popularity in the late nineteenth century reflects the congregation's desire to structurally embody, reflect and augment the multifaceted use of sacred space.<sup>220</sup>

Any visitor to Metropolitan will first encounter the chromatic contrast found in the façade. (Figure 2.13) The projection of the six buttresses, three entry portals and recessed arches establish spatial dynamism through visual and textural rhythm. The triangular shape of the buttresses resembles thirteenth century English buttresses such as those on St. Mary's Church, Higham Ferris, England, illustrated in John Henry Parker's *A Concise Dictionary of Architectural Terms* (1846). Reinforcing the vertical thrust of the structure, the granite trim, is incised with triangular accents. The horizontal granite strings balance this rhythm and emphasize

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<sup>216</sup> National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, #73002102. Metropolitan AME Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places July 23, 1976.

<sup>217</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson. *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2.* (Washington, D.C.: The

Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988) 227.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 220. During the early life of the structure this space was used to house heating equipment. In the closing years of the twentieth century, this space would be completely renovated to include administrative spaces, choir rooms, and Sunday School classrooms. The brick is supported by a concrete foundation and reinforced brick retaining wall. On the ground level, a multifunctional hall space bears strong similarities to Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Georgetown, erected in 1884.

<sup>219</sup> "Metropolitan AME Church National Registry of Historic Place Inventory—Nomination form", National Park Service National Registry of Historic Place Inventory, 5, <<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/73002102.pdf>>(Accessed May 30, 2015).

<sup>220</sup> Koehler and Carson do not mention any acoustic advantage in Metropolitan AME Church's sanctuary. The long record musical performances, ranging from orchestral to operatic, suggest the space was known for its acoustics. Also, Morsell, an active choir leader in the Methodist Episcopal denomination, more than likely gave great consideration to the matter of acoustics.

the various stories. The asymmetrical, diagonal roofline reinforces the structure's Gothic associations. Gothic pinnacles cap the buttresses, alongside other stylistic accents including the miniature Gothic tower on the eastern pier, the granite oriel lantern that crowns the central gable peak, and the cast iron finials on the western pier.<sup>221</sup> The lancet arches framing the stained glass windows complete the interplay of shape and value. Two dormer windows pierce each side of Metropolitan's shingled gable-front roof.

The interior of Metropolitan matches the exterior in its visual detail. Beyond the twin oak grand staircases leading to the sanctuary, a small set of stairs descends into the ground level auditorium. This large space, dedicated in 1885, originally consisted of an area that could be subdivided into smaller spaces.<sup>222</sup> The *Christian Recorder* article estimated the ground level auditorium to "seat 800 to 1000 with the Parlor and Infant Class Room."<sup>223</sup> This initial introduction to Metropolitan via the ground level auditorium also exposed attendees to new developments in interior design. Highlighting advancements in denominational church architecture, the large space could be segmented into smaller spaces through the use of sliding glass partitions.<sup>224</sup> Although there are no images of the space with glass partitions, the written record indicated the lower level auditorium was influenced by Akron plan church design. This ground level space included a dividable auditorium space, kitchen, nursery facilities and a large parlor. Throughout the week that followed, local Washington and Baltimore pastors preached at nightly services held in the room that measured, seventy-six by fifty-two feet.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson. *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2.* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988) 228.

<sup>222</sup> There are no photographs known that document the lower level auditorium in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

The ground level auditorium has traditionally been home to the congregation's weekly Sunday School program, in addition to hosting church ministries and community organizations. At the rear of this space, flanking the entry to the lower auditorium are two smaller rooms that are divided from the larger space.<sup>226</sup> Twentieth century renovations also included the addition of industrial kitchen facilities in the rear of the space under the pastor's study. In addition to the twin oak staircases located directly beyond the front entry bays, Samuel Morsell designed the sanctuary to be accessible from two passageways at the rear of the ground-floor auditorium. Off of the east passageway that provides access to the second story sanctuary, the design includes space intended to be the Pastor's study, providing a private space, adjacent to the sanctuary.<sup>227</sup>

The two oak grand staircases lead to the second story sanctuary from the lobby.<sup>228</sup> As the crowning jewel of the structure, the sanctuary contains three sections of slightly curved pews with, a horseshoe gallery above. (Figure 2.14) The space is oriented toward a recessed arch with a three-tiered, predominantly oak chancel dais completing the pulpit space. (Figure 2.15) The lectern and pulpit underwent changes during the building's restoration in the 1920s, under the direction of African-American architect John Lankford.<sup>229</sup> The congregation hosted several

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<sup>226</sup> Arnett, "Check XVI—The Metropolitan Church Opened," *Christian Recorder*, 26 Nov 1885, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database.

<sup>227</sup> The original plans of the 1886 structure have not been located. They are not included in the initial construction permit house at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of the District of Columbia. The Pastor's Study has traditionally been the space described above. Today, this space is used primarily on Sundays by the Pastor. By the mid-twentieth century, a small office off of the repurposed Nursery space (which was later converted into a church administrative office) served as the Pastor's administrative office. Since the sub-basement execution and development in the late 1990s, the Pastor also has a larger administrative office in the basement.

<sup>228</sup> Today this staircase is lined with purple carpet, the color that symbolizes the Episcopacy; this written account does not specify the carpet color in 1886.

<sup>229</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2.*, (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988) 229. For more information on John Anderson Lankford see Thomas Tyler Potterfield, *John A. Lankford and Charles T. Russell: Architects for Richmond's Black Community, 1900-1920*. (Richmond: T.T. Potterfield, 1990); Paul Kelsey Williams, "John Anderson Lankford," *African American Architects: a Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*, Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 253-255. John



operatic performances from renowned composers such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor during the early years of the twentieth century, thus requiring these alterations. This change in the sanctuary reflects a larger movement within American Protestantism that began to reevaluate the peripheral role of music in the worship service.<sup>230</sup> It also demonstrates the design responses to this African American community's cultural needs. Each decorative detail contributes toward this dynamic, opulent worship space.<sup>231</sup> The architect chromatically lightened the space with whitewashed walls and gold detailing in the ceiling and around the ceiling molding.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church is an example of Gothic Revival architecture in America that has been invested with aspects of African American socio-economic and religious identity. Jeanne Halgren Kilde's study of nineteenth century Protestant architecture provides an entry point for understanding social meanings communicated through the architecture of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Speaking specifically about the use of Gothic architectural vocabularies across

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Anderson Lankford (1874-1946) was Potosi, Missouri. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s he received extensive education, ultimately earning two master of science degrees from two AME educational institutions: Morris Brown and Wilberforce Universities. He received his architectural training through the International Correspondence School (Scranton, PA). While Lankford did spend time in education, he also had a successful career working in supervisory roles in southern mills. In 1902, Lankford designed the True Reformers Building. This was his first major commission and enabled him to develop a reputation for church and fraternal architectural designs. The AME denomination appointed Lankford Supervising Architect which allowed him to design over thirty-five structures in the United States of America and South Africa. It's unclear how long he served in this capacity but twenty years later he supervised Metropolitan's renovations. As early as 1901, he established ties with the church by marrying Bishop Henry McNeal Turner's granddaughter, Josephine Upshaw. In 1916, John Lankford authored *Artistic Churches & Other Designs*. He also broke racial barriers as Virginia and Washington, D.C.'s first African American licensed architect, in 1922 and 1924, respectively.

<sup>230</sup> The installation of an elevated platform for the choir, organ, and decorative pipes was a point of debate and contention, but reflects the congregation's interest in actively shaping the worship space. For more information of the architectural designs that adapted to shifts in liturgy and music see the following: Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Julian S. Peasant, "The Arts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as Viewed in the Architecture, Music and Liturgy of the Nineteenth Century," Diss. Ohio University, 1992.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, 224 & 229. John Lankford's renovation may have also removed a small, oddly proportioned Neo-Baroque dome. This feature was intended to imply height by capping the ceiling space with. For example, the original decorative brass neoclassical lighting fixtures are accented by Gothic-inspired quatrefoil ceiling panel designs.

American Protestant denominations, she writes, “During a period of increasing social upheaval that seemed to herald the destruction of denominations, the Gothic aesthetic offered an effective means of maintaining Protestant cohesion.”<sup>232</sup> Although the author is referring to white mainstream nineteenth century religious trends, the use of the Gothic in the case of African American ecclesiastical structures entails a much more complex story. This use situates the A.M.E. denomination in the large American religious landscape, thus exercising agency in actively shaping, coloring and challenging dominant perceptions of American religion. African American religious denominations learned how to work through difference in order to accomplish unified goals such as social and economic equality. Metropolitan A.M.E.C.’s adoption of Gothic Revival architectural vocabularies is a strategic material multilayered articulation of sociopolitical and cultural identity grounded in Classical Black Nationalism.

Metropolitan A.M.E. Church formally celebrated the completion of its building through two sets of three dedicatory services held Sunday, November 8, 1885 and Sunday, May 30, 1886. The first dedication observed the opening of the building and christened the first level auditorium and auxiliary spaces.<sup>233</sup> This occasion furthered the tradition of public pageantry and processional as a means to claims space.<sup>234</sup> The first worship service of the day commenced with a grand procession of bishops, clergy and church officers up the block from Bethel Hall to

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<sup>232</sup> Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: the Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in 19th Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.

<sup>233</sup> Everett, “Washington Correspondence—Dedication Exercises for the Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC,” *Christian Recorder*, 19 Nov 1885, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 21, 2015). In Everett’s account, this level is referred to as the basement, despite the fact there was a subbasement for fuel and heating machinery. John A. Simms also documents this event and refers to this space as the lecture hall.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* All three accounts published in the *Christian Recorder* describe the stormy conditions attendees overcame to enter that new building. The thunderstorms and muddy conditions seemed to add gravitas to the opening of the national church.

Metropolitan.<sup>235</sup> While pioneering lay leaders from Union Bethel appeared prominently in the program, one of the few men to serve as pastor to both Israel Bethel Church and Union Bethel Church, Bishop Alexander Wayman, delivered the dedicatory sermon.<sup>236</sup> In the denominational financial secretary's summary of the proceedings published in the *Christian Recorder*, the Rev. Benjamin Arnett offered this succinct statement of the first sermon delivered in this connectional church:

Bishop Wayman stated his text, Genesis xxviii, 17, "And he was afraid, and said how dreadful is this place." He said the word dreadful in the text, in the opinion of many commentators, should be rendered "glorious," and the word afraid should be rendered awe-stricken. Dr. Watkins made a brief address in which he alluded to the Herculean efforts the congregation had made.<sup>237</sup>

This sermon articulated how denominational leaders intended to communicate ideas about their identity as a steadfast, diligent, pious African American religious community. Akin to the associative characteristics of European medieval cathedrals, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's imposing architectural stature was meant to bring about a sense of awe. The tone of this sermon evoked the influence of popular nineteenth century conceptions of the architectural sublime. Emphasizing Biblical precedents of "glorious" sites where God spoke to man, the dedicatory sermon established a firm foundation for the historic layers of African American culture.

The denomination anticipated the opening of Metropolitan Church would to be a historic moment. In Financial Secretary Arnett's celebratory review in the *Christian Recorder*, he boasts of use of "punch-pin cards of the J S S Invincible Workers" to document the "data" of the

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<sup>235</sup> Arnett, "Check XVI—The Metropolitan Church Opened," *Christian Recorder*, 26 Nov 1885, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015).

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. As if to communicate the support for Metropolitan from all tiers of denominational leadership, Bishop Alexander Wayman preached the morning service and recently promoted James Handy, Presiding Elder of the Potomac District preached the early afternoon service.<sup>236</sup> Perhaps a symbolic gesture of fiscal approval, the denomination's financial secretary, The Rev. Benjamin W. Arnett offered the final sermon.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

occasion.<sup>238</sup> The following passage appeared on each card: “More commodious house of worship dedicated to Almighty God in all respects worthy of the age in which we live and in keeping with the improvements now in progress in the National Capitol.”<sup>239</sup> Arnett omits how this system was implemented. Using modern technology, Metropolitan aimed to establish the standard for how to project racial advancement through a variety of means ranging from comprehensive documentation of the space and its various uses to materially propagating a narrative of divinely sanctioned racial and denominational progress. This inaugural 1885 dedication was only a prelude to a grander celebration that would fill the church to its capacity in the dedication of the sanctuary and memorial windows in 1886.

Arnett’s account of this 1885 dedicatory service, although emphasizing the financial capability of these communities and requesting additional fiscal support, made an effort to highlight the spiritual work expected of Metropolitan. Arnett recalls: “Two ladies came forward and joined the church; one from Portsmouth, Va., and the other from Albany, Ga. The latter, Bishop Wayman said was the sister of Mrs. Bishop [Richard] Cain and was kidnapped fully forty years ago and sold into slavery...”<sup>240</sup> Just as Israel Church and Union Bethel welcomed newly freed enslaved persons migrating from the south, Metropolitan sought to serve as a beacon of hope, a sanctuary of communal and spiritual belonging, and a space for introducing middle class, Victorian values to the masses. While it appears that Metropolitan Church claimed to be an egalitarian space that “had no color-line,” congregational oral history suggests otherwise. In interviews conducted with church historians, Mrs. Thelma Jacobs and Mrs. Gwendolyn Kimborough and former pastor, The Rev. Dr. Louis Charles-Harvey, all recounted a legacy of seating in the sanctuary according to skin tone: Lighter skinned individuals sat on the Sixteenth

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

Street side, while darker skinned attendees sat on the Fifteenth Street side.<sup>241</sup> While the origins and tenure of this policy has been lost in the oral history narrative, it leaves several questions unanswered. For instance, did this policy supersede the practice of families sitting together? These accounts affirm that despite being open to all, certain differences within the religious community were spatially expressed in Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.

All sectors of the denomination followed the development of Metropolitan AME Church's construction. Leading up to the final dedication on May 30 1886, the *Christian Recorder* advertised events in February and published the tentative program on May 27.<sup>242</sup> The publication included Charleston-based minister the Rev. W.H. Heard's experience of making this A.M.E. pilgrimage north to celebrate this architectural feat.<sup>243</sup> The *Christian Recorder* offers a textual description and visual illustration of the structure in the June 3, 1886 issue. (Figure 2.16) While the origins of this pen drawing are unclear, the image aims to communicate the imposing monumentality of the Gothic Revival structure. The street façade dwarfs the human figures, thus compositionally conveying the intended impact this church would have on the capital's landscape. Line, shape and architectural massing emphasize the Gothic Revival attributes.

The *Christian Recorder* offered textual description that was intended to complement the image. In very precise language, the *Christian Recorder* remarked:

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<sup>241</sup>The Rev. Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey, interview by author, digital recording, Phone interview, 28 April 2013. There is also no evidence that AME conference or Metropolitan members purchases pews in the sanctuary.

<sup>242</sup> Unidentified Author, "Dedication of the Metropolitan AME Church," *Christian Recorder*, 5 Feb 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 19, 2014); Unidentified Author, "Program for the Dedication of the Metropolitan AME Church," *Christian Recorder*, 27 May 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 19, 2014)

<sup>243</sup> W.H. Heard, "The Round Trip: From Charleston to Boston and Return: a southern standpoint," *Christian Recorder*, 1 Jul 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: February 4, 2014). The pastor at the time of the 1886 dedication, The Rev. Theophilus Gould Stewart and Bishop Daniel A. Payne also reference the occasion in their manuscripts published by the A.M.E. Book Concern, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* and *Recollections of Seventy Years*.

It covers an area of 121 x 22 feet. The altitude of its main auditorium room is 32 feet; the seating capacity, including the great gallery, is 2,800. The pastor's study is in the immediate rear of the pulpit. The basement is divided into four class rooms, infant Sunday school room, library with capacity for 2,500 volumes, parlor and general Sunday school department. Besides this there is a sub-basement for fuel, heating apparatus, &c. A circular window in the front is dedicated to the Bishops of the connection, including the entire list from Allen down, their names being beautifully ground in the glass. Other windows bear the names of the forty-two conferences, each Conference being expected to contribute \$100 to the church. The furniture, gas fixtures, exquisite frescoing and superb \$5000 organ, gorgeous, yet soft tinted windows lettered and mottoed, all combine to make this church not only the largest, but the finest church edifice in the connection, the largest owned by colored people in the world and one of the largest churches in Washington.<sup>244</sup>

This author meant this description to offer readers and denominational investors visual and material evidence of A.M.E. progress. Whereas the illustration detailed an imposing Gothic Revival edifice, the description presented a multifunctional, well-defined space that could serve the array of need for a national church and cultural headquarters. Although the church was equipped with heating and ventilation systems considered a requirement for commodious spaces, the actual structure contrasted with preliminary descriptions published before 1886. Morsell and supervising contractor and engineer George Dearing eliminated the Akron plan for the second story sanctuary, the auxiliary committee room and toilets. The sanctuary of Metropolitan AME Church was able to accommodate 2,800 persons as opposed to the initial 1,021. Finally, the realized structure excluded the Young Men's Christian Association space and library space, initially situated over the transept.

The May 27 advertisement of the dedicatory program offers a clearer glimpse of the activities of the day. Similar to the initial dedication in 1885, the day featured three services, at 10:30 A.M., 3:00 P.M. and 7:30 P.M. The *Christian Recorder* reported the grand procession

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<sup>244</sup> Anonymous, "Dedication of The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church," *Christian Recorder*, 3 Jun 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: February 5, 2014). The *Christian Recorder* went on to offer a historical account that credits, The Rev. William H. Hunter as the earliest to advance the Metropolitan vision.

consisting of a “column of ministers” started the first worship service held in the sanctuary.<sup>245</sup>

Perhaps as a gesture of repentance for Israel Church’s defiance of denominational authority, church lay leader John A Simms greeted the clerical file with the following words:

BISHOPS OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH: We present to you in the name of Almighty God the keys of this beautiful temple erected to the honor and glory of his name, as loyal members and officers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose Discipline we love, honor and obey, having accepted it as the law of our Church. These keys shall never be turned against the minister legally appointed by the Bishop of the A.M.E. church to minister in holy things in this sacred temple to be dedicated today to the worship of the Most High, and we pray that peace and prosperity may dwell in our midst and that the blessings of Divine Providence may continue with the whole connection.<sup>246</sup>

Simms delivered the keys to the bishops leading the procession to the sanctuary. Bishop Campbell uttered the first sacred words in the new sanctuary, Psalm 84, “How amiable are thy tabernacle[s], O Lord of host...”<sup>247</sup> The Episcopacy dominated the program with every position on the program held by a Bishop with the exception of local Baltimore Conference leader, the Rev. James H.A. Johnson, who was given the honor of reading the roll of contributing Annual Conferences.<sup>248</sup> The *Washington Post* documented the 1886 dedication of the sanctuary in a lengthy article entitled, “Many Bishops Present: The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church Dedication.” This newspaper article outlined the activities and celebrated the completed structure as “an embodiment of strength and permanence.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Bishop Alexander Wayman, “Programme for the Dedication of the Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, D.C., May 30 1886,” *Christian Recorder*, 27 May 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: February 5, 2014).

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Unidentified Author, “Many Bishops Present: The Metropolitan AME Church Dedication,” *Washington Post*, 31 May 1886, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database, (Accessed: May 3, 2015).

One of the staunchest supporters of the “National” church project and one of the visionaries behind this period of expansion in African Methodism, Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne delivered the pinnacle of the morning worship service, the sermon. Prior to this moment, Payne displayed his passion for a national church via the words of monetary appeals and even expressed his excitement generated by site visits in his journal.<sup>250</sup> On the day of the dedication, Payne appeared visibly ill and exhausted from the trip to Washington, D.C. Subsequently, Payne reflected,

When I reached the edifice I had to be supported by Bishop Shorter up the steps and into the pulpit, where an easy-chair had been provided for my feeble frame. When I arose at the close of the opening services I did not expect to be able to stand upon my feet longer than a few minutes, nor to say more than a few words, and these I did not expect to be heard in that immense building, holding twenty-five hundred souls, but only by the few around me and near the pulpit. I took my text in Psalms xcii. 12-14, and preached full forty minutes, I am told, in a clear voice that was distinctly heard in every part of the vast edifice. I say I preached; I did not preach. The Spirit of the Lord spake through me, inspiring me with strength to do what I had felt to be utterly impossible to do on taking my stand at the sacred desk. Thus it has ever been. He has ever been my support, and I fully believe that my powers of endurance and lengthened days have been due to that triple consecration of myself, by my sainted parents, to the Lord's service when I was but a helpless infant. With this date I close the chapters which briefly record the memoirs of seventy-three years.<sup>251</sup>

Emphasizing the immense scale of the structure, he even speaks to the early obstacles of projecting one’s voice through such a large space, without modern auditory enhancements.

Bishop Payne described the efforts to erect a national church and the expectations for this congregation with these biblical verses, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the

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<sup>250</sup> Daniel Payne, “Appeal on Behalf of Union Bethel (Metropolitan Church),” *Christian Recorder*, 16 Nov 1882, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: March 11, 2015). As documented in his memoir, *Recollection of Seventy Years* (1888), during the period of Metropolitan’s construction, Bishop Payne visited the site, describing it as “the noblest of out chapels for dimensions, convenience and beauty.” He also preach a sermon entitled “National Greatness: True, Solid and Perpetual.” 319-321.

<sup>251</sup> Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1888), 323-324.



courts of our God.”<sup>252</sup> Underscoring the centrality of institution building in his career, Payne concludes his autobiographical account with the aforementioned passage of his sermon at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church.

The Financial Secretary and future Bishop provided an overview of Metropolitan’s material significance in an open letter to the denomination. Arnett highlights important figures such as John Simms, including his personal role, that reflect that scale and characteristics that define the visual attributes of the structure. Arnett presents this depiction in a celebratory tone while acquainting the larger audience with the stylistic and cultural vocabulary associated with the A.M.E. national church:

The new church building is GOTHIC in style, inside and out. The front is an excellent combination of red brick, trimmed with granite. The Auditorium is beautifully finished ASH, with Walnut-Reed molding in shellac finish. The Galleries and choir are provided with four rows of seats accommodating 500 persons. The Auditorium is SEVENTY-SIX semi-circle seats, four aisles; entire seating capacity, 2500. THE design and plan is by Mr. SAMUEL G.T. MORSELL, a practical builder and architect, who faithfully superintended the erection of the church in a most thorough and business-like manner. The materials used in the building have all been the very best, and the work, by MR. DEARING, the CONTRACTOR and BUILDER, has been done to the entire satisfaction of the church.<sup>253</sup>

The Rev. Arnett succinctly and eloquently stated the material accomplishments represented in Metropolitan as well as its financial obligations. Reiterating the narrative of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church as architectural evidence of racial advancement, Arnett’s words also provided the outside world view of the denominational structure and its apparent efficiency.

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<sup>252</sup> Anonymous, “Dedication of The Metropolitan A.M.E. Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 3 Jun 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives.; Audrey Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle: Class Colorism and Rumor and the Case of Black Washington, D.C.* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, 2006), 104-5.

<sup>253</sup> Bishop Benjamin Arnett, “To the Bishops and Members of the Several Annual Conferences of the A.M.E. Church,” as reproduced in Jefferson S. Coage, “The History of the Memorial Windows,” 4, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

On March 12, 1885, about two months before to the dedication of Metropolitan's ground level auditorium, the *Christian Recorder* published two articles by unidentified authors entitled, "Building Air Castles or a Half Hour Fanaticism" and "By Our Fruits We Shall be Judged." Featured, these two articles emphasized the importance of physical institutional development as a denominational obligation that would be examined by history. "Building Air Castles or a Half Hour Fanaticism" provided a lengthy description of the architectural renovation and improvement of Wilberforce University, the denomination's first educational institution and one of the earliest historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The A.M.E. church purchased Wilberforce University from the Methodist Episcopal denomination shortly after the Civil War.<sup>254</sup> The campus boasted two rows of cottage-like structures, alongside the main building, with its pronounced veranda.<sup>255</sup> (Figure 2.17) Over a long essay, the author meticulously describes every aspect of the campus, such as dormitories, industrial space, and Alumni Hall, which he or she compares to Clark University's Chrisman Hall.<sup>256</sup>

The anonymous author solicits support of all denominational projects including institutional building in the essay "By Our Fruits We Shall Be Judged." The contributor offered this rationale for an increase in lay financial support: "The A. M. E. Church is the largest most efficient and most powerful religious organization of colored men on earth, with church property worth nearly \$4,000,000. This, in itself, is ground for the reasonableness of its requiring a larger

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<sup>254</sup> Frederick A. McGinnis, *A History and An Interpretation of Wilberforce University*, (Blanchester: The Brown Publishing Company, 1941).

<sup>255</sup> Frederick A. McGinnis, *A History and an Interpretation of Wilberforce University*, Frontispiece, illustration of campus during the period it was purchased by the AME denomination. These small structures would acquaint students with examples of Revival ornamentation applied to rural structures as outlined by Alexander Jackson Downing.

<sup>256</sup> The inclusion of Clark University (Atlanta) further situates the AME university in the Methodist landscape as Clark was affiliated with the Freeman Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal denomination.

amount of money than it would otherwise do.”<sup>257</sup> The A.M.E. denomination, building on the tradition of Richard Allen, engaged in an array of institutional policies and practices. Alongside institutional landmarks such as Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church (Philadelphia, PA), Wilberforce University (Wilberforce, OH) and Morris Brown College (Atlanta, GA), Metropolitan A.M.E. Church must be understood as a result of this larger architectural discourse and institutional agenda to inscribe an African Methodist identity across the nation.

About two months before the May 1886 dedication, Metropolitan received a new pastor, Theophilus G. Steward. He provided a different perspective on the 1886 dedication, emphasizing the enormity of the charge he was given. Considering his appointment only months before the dedication, Steward admitted that the Financial Secretary, the Rev. Benjamin Arnett, prepared the program for the festivities. In his autobiographical account, Steward recalls:

The dedicatory services occupied Sunday and all of the week following; during which time I remained a silent observer and an earnest student. The Sunday following I began my administration and soon discovered that my task was a heavy one. The church was in debt; the creditors impatient; and the congregation not wealthy, nor of the extraordinary self-sacrificing class. During the dedications large subscriptions had been announced totaling about \$12,000 and this had been published in such a way as to lead creditors to think the money was on hand. Early Monday morning after my first Sunday's labors, my troubles began, and for two eventful years they kept up. Creditors harassed me in person and by letter for what was justly due them, and the church kept diligently at work, and kept on paying its debts with commendable zeal; but some of the debts were ageing although diminishing, and creditors, though courteous, were nevertheless importunate... My church was made up generally of a highly intelligent class of people; government employees, business men, professional men, school teachers and persons of character and literary taste. Of course all were not up to this standard, but many were. We had a goodly number of common laborers, washer-women, servants of all grades, and a few mechanics. Our church was not exclusive, but a fair representative of real democracy. The congregation was remarkable for its warm, loving spirit. There was unity,

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<sup>257</sup> Unidentified Author, ““By Our Fruits We Shall be Judged,” *Christian Recorder*, 12 Mar 1885, African American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: March 10, 2015). The author’s estimation of \$4,000,000 in property was an assessment of the denomination’s real estate holding across the Atlantic and throughout North America.

because there was oneness of spirit. It was simply glorious to preach in such a church building to such a warm-hearted, co-operative people...<sup>258</sup>

Pastor Steward couples the fiscal pressure of the new structure with a characterization of the congregation. This portrayal of Metropolitan AME Church's congregation in the years following its erection suggests the class diversity of this national church.

T.G. Steward carefully crafted the narrative around Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in an effort to establish the site as an integral part of the A.M.E. historic landscape. About four months after the spring dedication, Pastor Steward authored an essay that represented the church history as articulated by John A. Simms Sr., the Rev. James A. Handy and John F. Cook. He also attempted to define the role of this congregation in the denominational landscape.

Acknowledging Israel Church's legacy, Steward writes that Metropolitan was envisioned as a "...church somewhat national in its characteristics, built largely by the congregation in a general way, and to be open to the general public...a kind of connectional monumental church representing the intelligence and religion of the American Negro at the nation's capital."<sup>259</sup>

Steward concludes this entry with this warning: "Brethren, the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church is our beautiful, grand expression [and] will reflect upon us national honor. But if abandoned, it will stand but the most prominent, striking, expressive and expensive monument of our folly that we have as yet erected."<sup>260</sup> This cautionary note reflected the tone of frustration from the unfulfilled denominational financial commitments. Metropolitan's advocate maintained his campaign in the

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<sup>258</sup>Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 228-9, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html> > (accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>259</sup> Theophilus Steward, "The Metropolitan Church: Its History, Its Development and its Future," *Christian Recorder*, 2 Sep 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: April 15, 2015)

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

pages of the *Christian Recorder*.<sup>261</sup> Three different essays by Steward appeared in the denominational organ.<sup>262</sup> While the first reported on the life of the church with updates on local fundraising events, the next two articles, with the final entitled, “The Metropolitan Church: A Grand Idea, What Does It Lack?” appeared to openly criticize denominational leaders for their failure to contribute the previously committed \$20,000.<sup>263</sup>

In between the lines of his apparent frustration, Steward wove a historical narrative that established Metropolitan as a culturally significant space erected with the intention of serving as an architectural laurel of the A.M.E. denomination and the African American race. This material achievement was articulated in late nineteenth century Victorian vocabularies that socialized a diverse community that included formerly enslaved persons, laborers, clerks among its membership, as well as Frederick Douglas and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. In this way, Metropolitan can be understood as an extension of African American middle class values; an aesthetic that was often mirrored in similar domestic spaces. The Gothic Revival asymmetrical, vertical façade alongside the much prized denominational stained glass window program to be discussed in the following chapter provided the rich stylistic foundation for this site that continued to beckon to the African American communities’ most visible leaders.

Metropolitan AME Church initiated a period of architectural expansion for the denomination that reflected the diversity of the American urban landscape. The A.M.E. denomination employed architects and builders, regardless of race. Two years after

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<sup>261</sup> Rev. Theophilus Steward, “Metropolitan Notes,” *Christian Recorder*, 9 Dec 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015); Rev. Theophilus Steward, “The Metropolitan Church, a Grand Idea—What Does It Lack?” *Christian Recorder*, 16 Dec 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015); Rev. Theophilus Steward, “The Metropolitan Church,” *Christian Recorder*, 30 Dec 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database, (accessed: May 20, 2015).

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Rev. Theophilus Steward, “The Metropolitan Church, a Grand Idea—What Does It Lack?” *Christian Recorder*, 16 Dec 1886, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database.

Metropolitan's completion, the denomination employed Francis J. Roberson, an African American architect trained at the Technische Hochschule of Karlsruhe University in Germany, to draft plans for St. Peter's A.M.E. Church in Minneapolis.<sup>264</sup> In addition, African American stained-glass window designer, William Hazel was commissioned to design memorial windows for the structure.<sup>265</sup> During the early twentieth century, the denomination used both black and white architects in Wilberforce University campus renovations. As the A.M.E. school grew exponentially at the close of the century, the campus added new buildings such as Arnett Hall (c.1910) by John Lankford and Emery Hall (1913) by Frank Packard, a white architect.

Throughout the twentieth century, the A.M.E. denomination enlisted over twenty African American architects. This list includes the leading pioneers such as Calvin McKissik, William Pittman, Wallace A. Rayfield, Paul Revere Williams and Albert I. Cassell.<sup>266</sup> This attention to the racial background was examined in order to suggest that the denominational structural character was formed by a wide range of figures, ranging from builders to established architects who specialized in ecclesiastical construction and design. Furthermore, while it was not always an easy feat, the A.M.E. church was able to mobilize financial support, for an international institutional building campaign.<sup>267</sup> This reinforces the notion of the African American community maintaining a legacy of fiscal agency that ensured an architectural heritage and provided space

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<sup>264</sup>David Reihle, "Francis Jefferson Roberson," *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 186-1945*, Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 344.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, 343.

<sup>266</sup> For more information on AME architectural commissions, see the following biographical entries in Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., "African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 186-1945," (New York: Routledge, 2004),: Albert I. Cassell (Pilgrim AME Church, NE Washington DC, n.d); Calvin McKissik, secured several commissions including the AME Publishing House in Nashville, TN, n.d, the AME Sunday School Union Publishing House, Nashville, TN, 1930, & Payne Chapel AME Church, Nashville, TN, 1921.

<sup>267</sup>Wright, S. Richard Wright's *Encyclopedia of African Methodism* included statistical charts that evidenced institutional growth. Between 1866 and 1896, the A.M.E. denominational property value increased from \$825,000 to \$8,630,000. In that same period, the A.M.E. church founded and erected 19 educational facilities and 4,564 churches.

for generations to come. This structure is a testament to this community's cultural, material and financial freedom and agency.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter documented the local and denominational evolution that resulted in the construction of Metropolitan AME Church. The building synthesized the legacies of two AME congregations, Israel Bethel AME Church and Union Bethel AME Church. The denominational bishops and the Washington, D.C. AME community crafted a building campaign to erect a national church. This idea was promoted throughout the 1870s and 1880s, through textual and visual description. Grand ceremonious services marked each phase of construction and amplified the cultural symbolism of the site. When considering the architectural significance of this Cathedral of African Methodism, it is imperative to analyze Metropolitan AME Church against the local and national trends in ecclesiastical architecture. Metropolitan AME Church complicates the standing discourse on African American architecture. The minds behind Metropolitan intended to demonstrate racial advancement through architecture. The narrative crafted around the site even references the success of employing Samuel T.G. Morsell, a prominent white Methodist Episcopal architect, to design the structure. As an instance of Gothic Revival vocabularies being used in the service of Black Classical Nationalism, Metropolitan AME Church exemplified a Washington red-brick auditorium-style church. This religious edifice represented an era of institutional building in the denomination.

The title Cathedral of African Methodism is often associated with Metropolitan AME Church, despite the term's scant appearance during the late nineteenth century. This title reflects a period of international denominational expansion. Lawrence S. Little's 1997 book, *Disciples of the Liberty: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916*,

considers how the denomination developed their aims of extending liberty to the oppressed, both nationally and globally. Influenced by emigrationist discourse and evangelical commitments, the A.M.E. denomination explored the viability of African Methodism outside of the United States throughout early nineteenth century. Considering the ways in which the AME denomination engaged and responded to the development of American Imperialism, Little asserts:

Constantly critiquing their own positions, [the AME hierarchy] synthesized black political and social ideologies and black theologies and developed an international communications network that gave voice to global oppression and liberty...As members of a black religious bourgeoisie, AME leaders had a vested interest in the American ideals, institutions, and culture they had helped produced. They sought acceptance in an American society that rejected them because of race. To gain entrance into this society they offered themselves and other African American leaders as examples of middle class American respectability and true barometers of the intelligence, ability, competence, and loyalty required for full citizenship. ...These AME leaders were proactive agents in the spread of American civilization and American Protestant evangelism. They built missions and schools in overseas empires of the industrial nations, they served in the American military and the diplomatic corps, and they organized and financed international economic ventures and trade. They were fully immersed in the imperial and evangelical surges of the age and were fully cognizant of the results and consequences of those surges and their actions.<sup>268</sup>

The denomination set out to define what equal citizenship meant for people of African descent. They explored this idea in churches located in a variety of environments, ranging from metropolises of Western thought, such as Boston, Massachusetts, to African nations like Liberia. Little suggests the denomination formulated an A.M.E. Foreign Policy that was committed to the paradoxical poles of “advancing the ideals of liberty, equality and self-determination” and confronting racism as a global concern.<sup>269</sup> Although the late nineteenth produced some of the most successful efforts to spread African Methodism across the world, this period must be understood as a part of a long endeavor. As early as 1819, the Rev. Daniel Coker put his emigrationist rhetoric into action by moving to Liberia and establishing A.M.E. churches in that

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<sup>268</sup> Lawrence S. Little, *Disciples of Liberty: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), xii-xiii.

<sup>269</sup> Little, 82.



country as well as Sierra Leone.<sup>270</sup> By the 1830s, the denomination established churches in Haiti and Santo Domingo. Uplifting racial representation and “positive racial images” featuring cultural advancement were a central aspect of this initiative.<sup>271</sup>

This chapter also documented the interest in the ability of symbolic architecture, such as a national church, to articulate cultural and faith-based development. In other words, Metropolitan AME Church was an early architectural statement of an expanding black religious community born out of oppression that advanced their cause internationally. In the 1890s, A.M.E. bishops began making official visits to West Africa and South Africa.<sup>272</sup> In fact, by 1896, the denomination reported 7,175 members in South Africa.<sup>273</sup> This growth continued into the twentieth century. In the years following his 1924 alterations to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, John Lankford completed Cosmic Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Capetown, South Africa. Metropolitan A.M.E. Church initiated a building program that would establish spaces in which the denomination could influence how people of color define themselves and the perception of the race. Although their international agenda was confined to Africa and the Caribbean, as late as the 1920s, the A.M.E. Church erected structures that were meant to communicate cultural advancement.

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<sup>270</sup> Little, 76. The author notes that these early congregations the Rev. Daniel Coker founded did not survive into the late nineteenth century.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>272</sup> Wright, *The Chronology of African Methodism* documents the first bishop visiting West Africa in 1891 and South Africa in 1898. Although the chronology did not specify which bishop, Wright’s history also records Bishop Henry McNeal Turner traveling to West Africa on behalf of the church in 1893. He also travelled to South Africa in 1899.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. Denominational expansion extended as far south as Georgetown, British Guinea (now Guyana) where churches and educational facilities. In 1905, the A.M.E. Normal and Industrial Institute was erected in Georgetown, British Guinea.



Figure 2.1. Samuel T.G. Morsell, architect, A.M.E. Church (identified as Metropolitan A.M.E. Church), Washington, D.C., erected 1881-1886, undated photograph, Library of Congress.

This image is one of the earliest photographs of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Thomas Calloway and W.E.B. Du Bois included this photograph in the "Negro Exhibit," of the 1900 Paris Exposition. With this inclusion, the architectural progress of the A.M.E. denomination served as a material evidence of African American racial advancement.

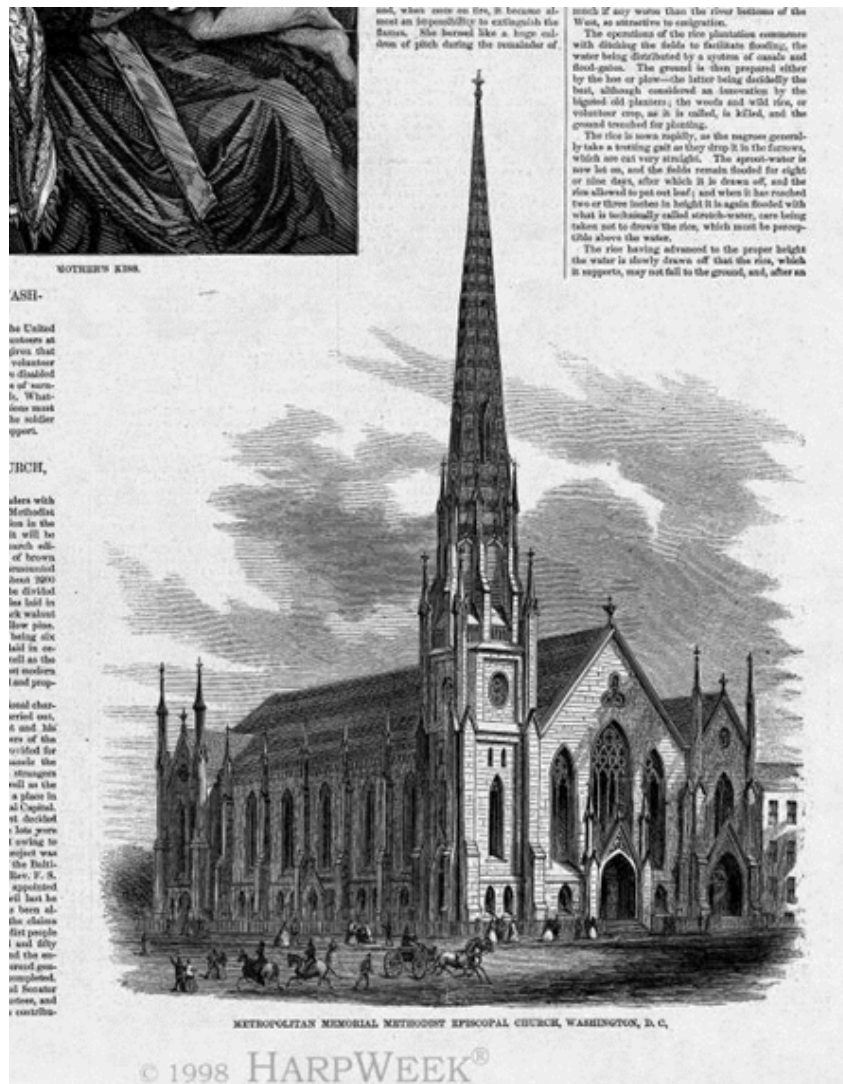
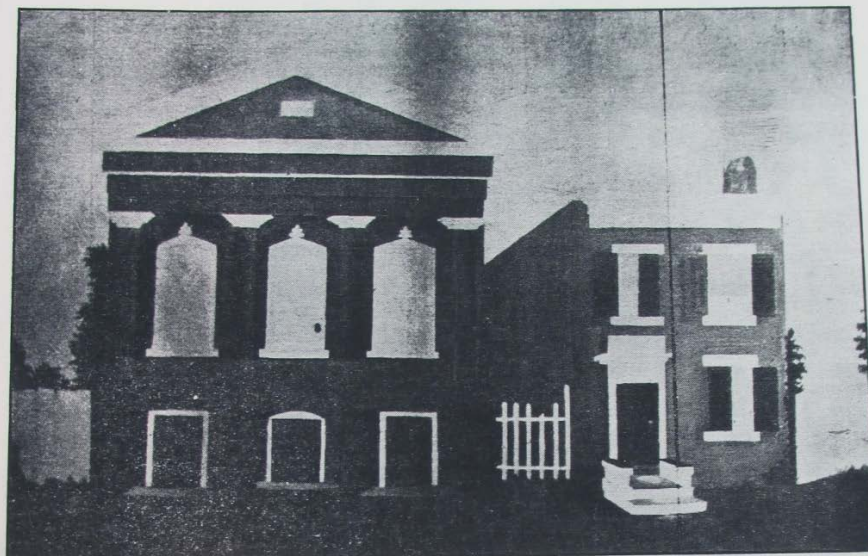


Figure 2.2. “Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 5 Jan 1867, Alexander Press *Harper’s Weekly*, structure erected 1854, <http://app.harpreweek.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/IssueImagesView.asp?titleId=HW&volumeId=1867&issueId=0105&page=5> (accessed: August, 2015).

Samuel T.G. Morsell’s Metropolitan Methodist stood as a testament to the architect’s reputation and stature in the city. This church, with its massive tower that pierced the skyline, was one of the capitol’s most iconic Neogothic structures. An illustration of Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church was circulated in news outlets like *Harper’s Weekly*, thus attesting to the popularity of the architect. Almost twenty years after its erection, it influenced the selection of Morsell by the Building Committee and A.M.E. denominational leaders.



OLD UNION BETHEL A. M. E. CHURCH

### History-continued

fourteen thousand dollars mortgage deed was burned before an enthusiastic congregation. Reverend C. E. Stewart served as pastor from 1922-1927. During his pastorate the present organ was installed. In 1927, Reverend W. H. Thomas was appointed and served to the period of his death in 1936. Under his leadership the bonded debt of the church was considerably reduced. His was the longest pastorate in the history of Metropolitan. Reverend J. Campbell Beckett was appointed pastor in 1936 and has served until the present time. Throughout this period from 1838

to 1938, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church has been a beacon light for African Methodists in the United States. It has been the center of important local and national assemblies of representatives Negroes throughout the nation, and its officers and members have been among the leading citizens of the District of Columbia.

Rev. J. Campbell Beckett served from 1936 to 1949. Rev. James E. Reese served as pastor 1949 to 1951.

Rev. G. Dewey Robinson has served from 1951 to the present time.

Figure 2.3. Unidentified builder or architect, Old Union Bethel AME, Washington, D.C., c. 1851, as republished in Metropolitan AME Church history authored during the late 1950s, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church vertical file, Washington Historical Society, Washington, D.C.

This church history includes the only known image of the structure that preceded Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, on the M Street lot, between 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets. This structure reflects the domestic meetinghouse architectural tradition, akin to Boston's African Meeting House.

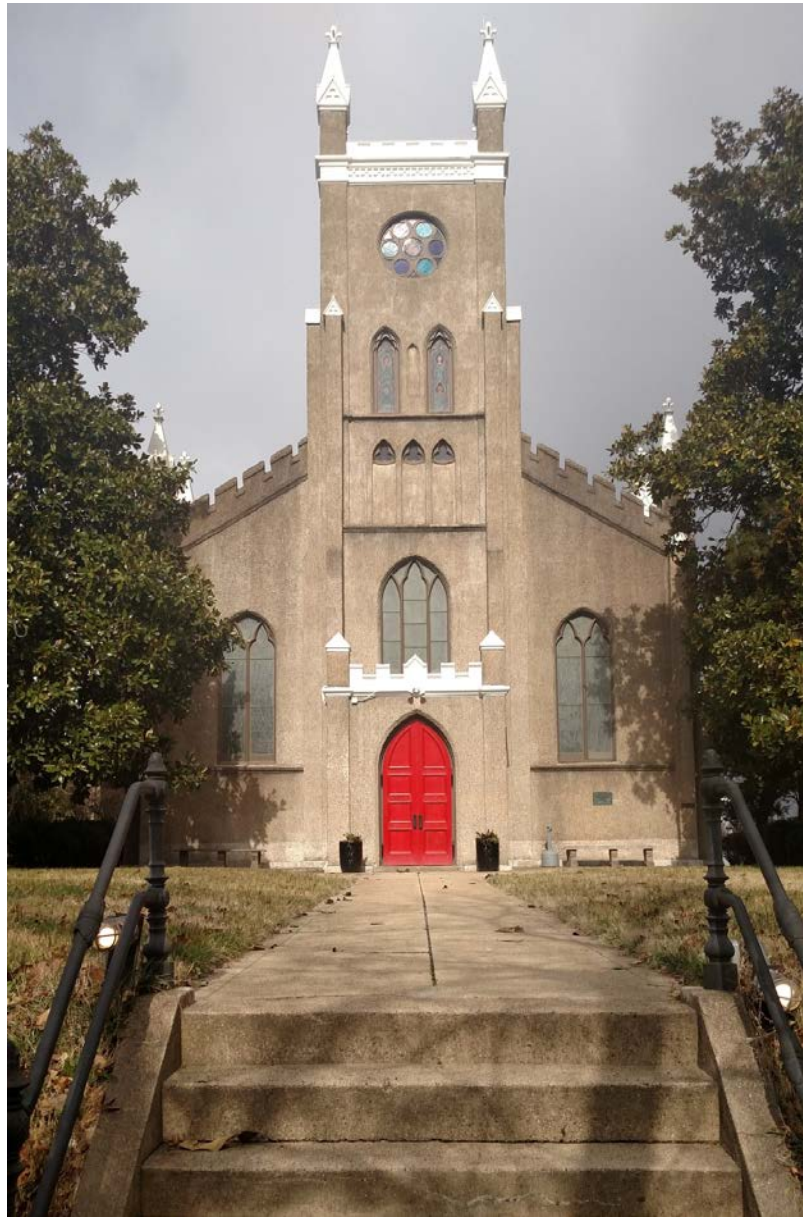


Figure 2.4. Benjamin Latrobe, architect, Christ Church, Washington, DC, 1803, photograph by the author.

Christ Church is one of the earliest Gothic Revival structures in Washington, D.C.

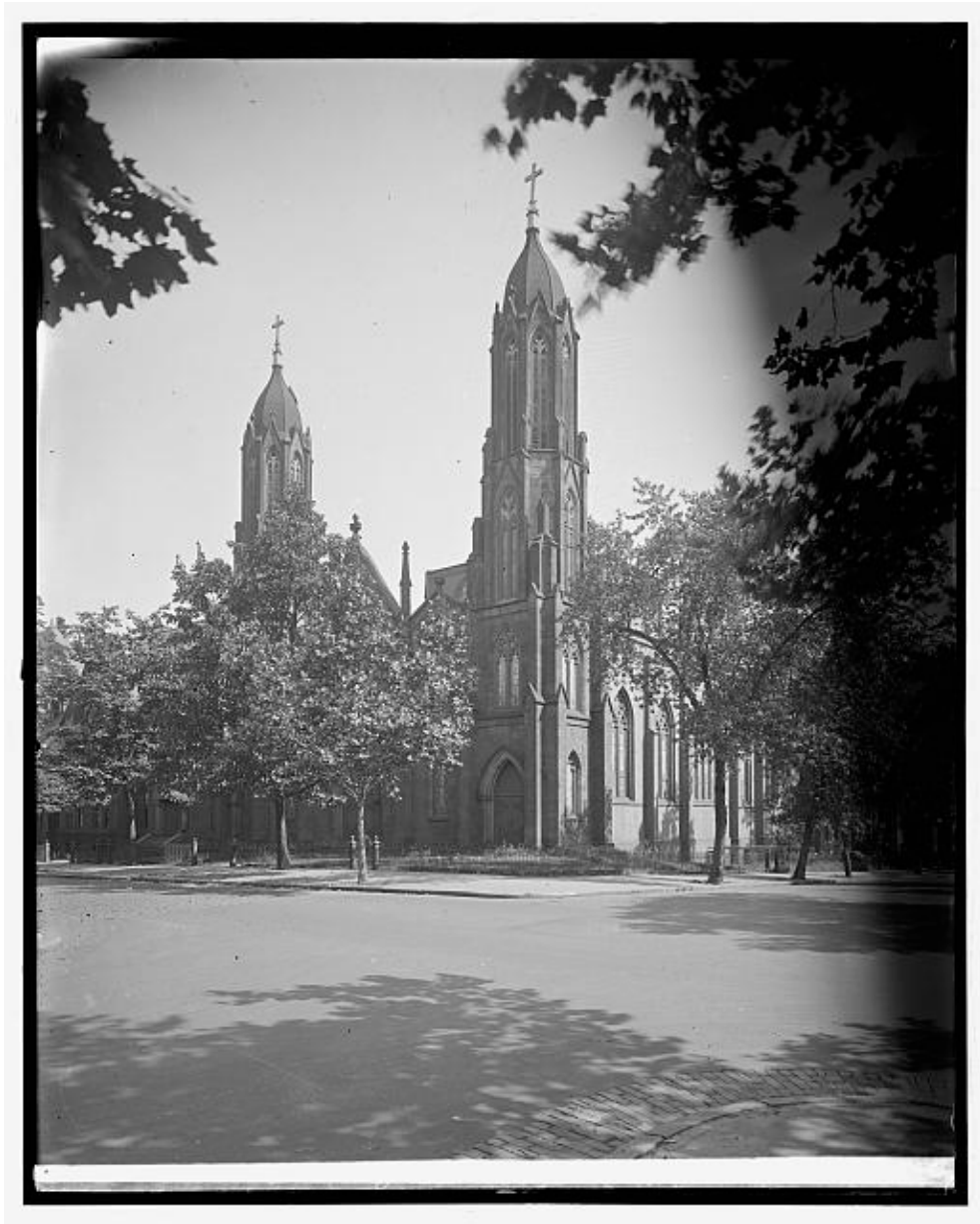


Figure 2.5. James Renwick, architect, Trinity Episcopal Church, Washington, DC (demolished), 1846, Library of Congress.

Only blocks from the U.S. Capitol, James Renwick's Trinity one of the largest Gothic Revival structures in the city. Trinity Church quickly became regarded as representing potential of conveying Protestantism through Gothic Revival elements such as monumental scale.



**S. T. G. Morsell.**

Figure 2.6. *Portrait of Samuel T.G. Morsell* from *Washington Post* article, “Identified with Capital Growth,” 8 May 1905, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post (1877-1997), pg. 3

Samuel T.G. Morsell completed Metropolitan AME Church after an extensive career as a practicing architect. In addition to several public buildings, Morsell was known for Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church and his service as city assessor for the DC government.

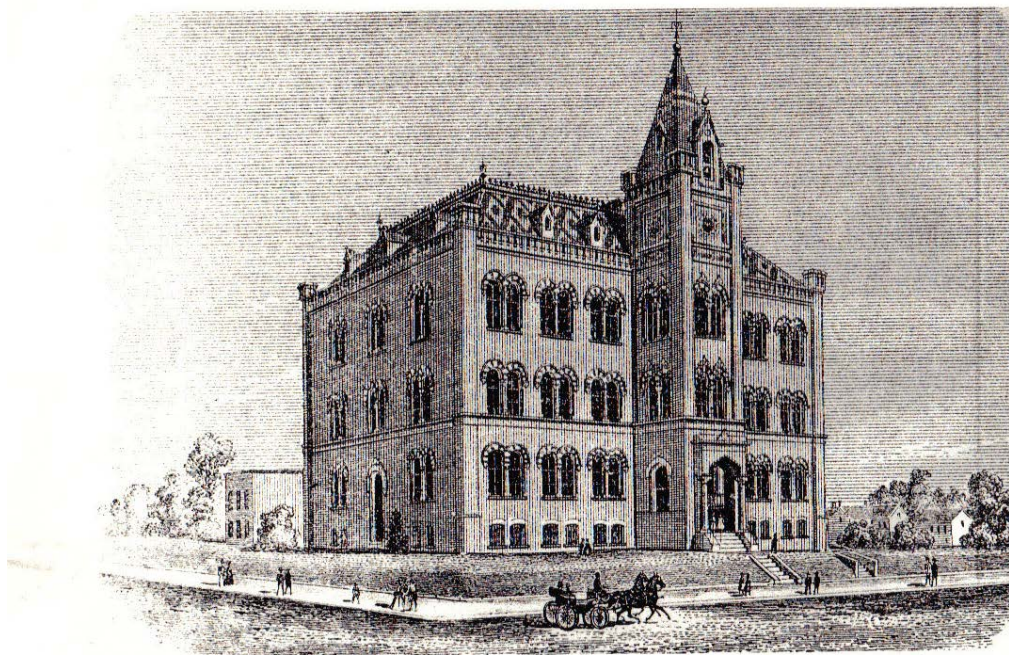


Figure 2.7. Adolph Cluss , architect, Charles Sumner School, Washington, D.C., 1872, Cook Family Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center,.

This structure is the early home to Charles Sumner School the first public school for African Americans in Washington, DC. This print is housed in the archives of a family affiliated with Union Bethel AME Church as Sumner School, attesting the interest in employing popular architectural styles for African American institution.





Figure 2.8. E. Francis Baldwin, architect, St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Washington, D.C., erected 1876, Library of Congress.

Erected in 1876, St. Augustine's Catholic Church was located around the corner from Union Bethel AME Church (later Metropolitan AME Church) on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Considering the proximity and stylistic similarities, it is highly probably that St. Augustine's served as an architectural precedent for Metropolitan AME Church.



Figure 2.9. Nathaniel P. Clow, builder-architect, Banneker-Douglass Museum (formerly Mount Moriah AME Church), Anne Arundel County, MD, 1875, photograph by author.

Originally erected between 1875 and 1876, this structure was home to one of Anne Arundel County's earliest African American communities in that area. Although the church was partially rebuilt in 1896 after a fire, this church is a testament to the influence the Gothic Revival style has in the AME community in the Mid-Atlantic region.



Figure 2.10. Calvin Brent Stowe, architect, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 15th Street, NW, Washington DC, 1876, Photograph by the author

This is the earliest public structure credited to Calvin Brent Stowe, the earliest documented practicing architect-builder. Historical narratives on the structure situate it as an Early English Gothic church that represents the architect and congregational leader, Rev. Alexander Crummell exploring Ecclesiological architectural traditions. The stained glass windows were designed by H.F. Gernhardt who designed programs by several prominent African American churches included Metropolitan AME Church.



2.11. Unidentified architect or builder, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, erected 1876-1884, Photograph by the author.

Mount Zion United Methodist Church is recognized as the oldest existent African American church in the District of Columbia. The simplified, flat Gothic Revival structure is also decorated with stained glass windows by H.F. Gernhardt that bears similarities with Metropolitan AME Church.

**PROGRAMME OF EXERCISES**  
**Of Laying The**  
**CORNER STONE**  
 —OF—  
**Union Bethel A. M. E. Church,**  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1881.**  
 AT 3 O'CLOCK P. M.

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**PROGRAMME:**

Hymn:—Page, 724; "Thou who has in Zion laid, the true Foundation Stone," by the Rev. C. W. Fitzhugh, of Baltimore.

Prayer:—By the Rev. L. J. Coppin, of Baltimore. Anthem, by the Choir.

Sermon:—By the Rev. T. McCants Stewart, D. D., of New York. Anthem, by the Choir.

Prayer:—By the Grand Chaplain, of the District Grand Lodge.

The Ceremony of laying the Corner Stone:—By the Most Worshipful Grand Master, L. C. Bailey, and the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia.

Articles to be placed in the Corner Stone:—Will be presented by a Committee of the Board of Trustees to the Grand Treasurer of the District Lodge.

Music:—By the Band.

Collection:—By the Pastor and Trustees for the New Church. Anthem, by the Choir.

Remarks:—By the Bishops, Presiding Elder, and other Eminent Divines. Doxology and Benediction by the Bishop.

Dinner and other Refreshments:—Will be served to Visitors at Bethel Hall, M-street, between 16th and 17th streets, from 1 to 3, and from 5 to 6 o'clock, p. m., at Moderate Prices.

A Grand Celebration and Promenade:—In honor of Laying the Corner Stone of the New Church, at Bethel Hall, from 8 to 12 o'clock, p. m.

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**GOOD MUSIC.**

**REFRESHMENTS AT MODERATE PRICES.**

"Come one, Come all, and enjoy an evening of pleasure."

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**Admission, 10 Cents**

S. B. Grant, 10th St.

Figure 2.12. Handbill for Metropolitan AME Church Cornerstone Laying Ceremony, Simms Family Papers, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

This poster advertised for Metropolitan A.M.E. Church's cornerstone festivities. In order to attract the local community (outside of the AME denomination), the flyer uses the more recognizable name, Union Bethel A.M.E. Church. The document also shows the congregation also used this ceremony as a fundraising opportunity by selling dinners and hosting grand celebratory activities.



Figure 2.13. Contemporary view of Metropolitan AME Church, 2013, photograph by the author. Samuel T.G. Morsell (architect), erected 1881-1886, Washington, D.C, photograph by author, 2013.

Since its erection, Metropolitan's exterior has been defined by the variety in material, pattern, color and value. This image illustrates the chromatic value created by the red-pressed brick and the white granite trim. Since the 1980s, the church has been surrounded by tall office buildings, which subordinate the nineteenth century monumental structure.

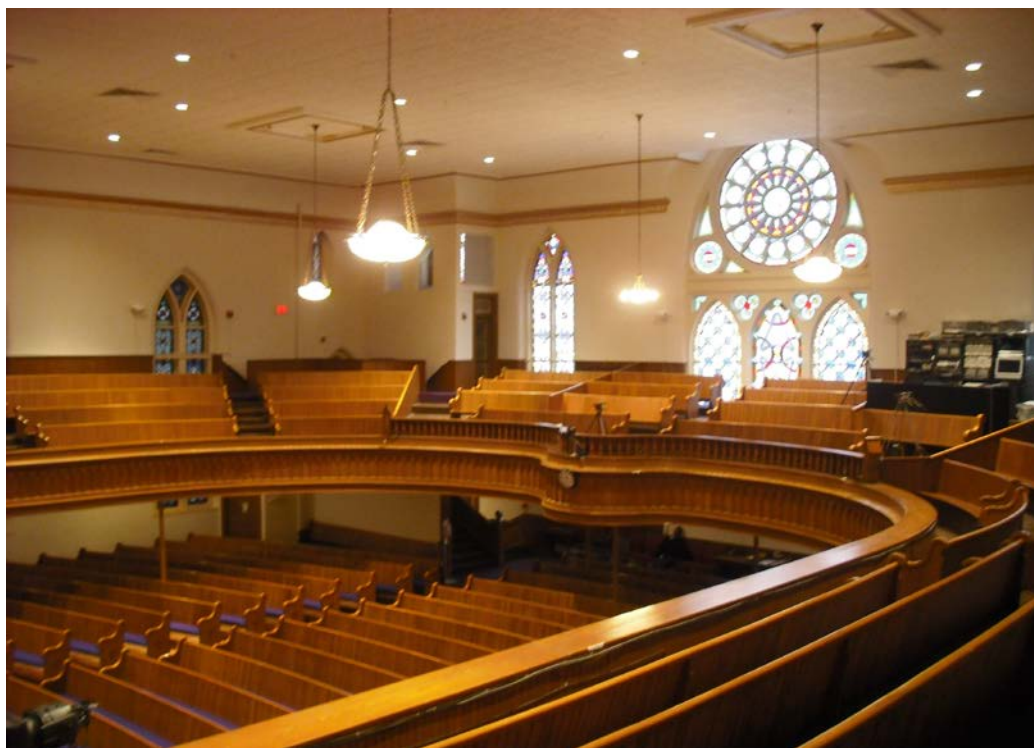


Figure 2.14. Metropolitan AME Church Sanctuary Interior, looking to street façade which features the Episcopal Rose Window, stained glass window renovation, 2010s, photograph by author, 2013.

This is a view of the second story sanctuary rose window. The space is defined by the rhythm established in the slightly curved pews, horse-shoe gallery and pointed arch windows.



Figure 2.15. Metropolitan AME Church Sanctuary Interior, looking toward the pulpit, Photograph by the author.

This view of Metropolitan AMEC's auditorium-style sanctuary, anchored by the pointed-arch, feature the pulpit—the space that has undergone the most alterations since 1881.





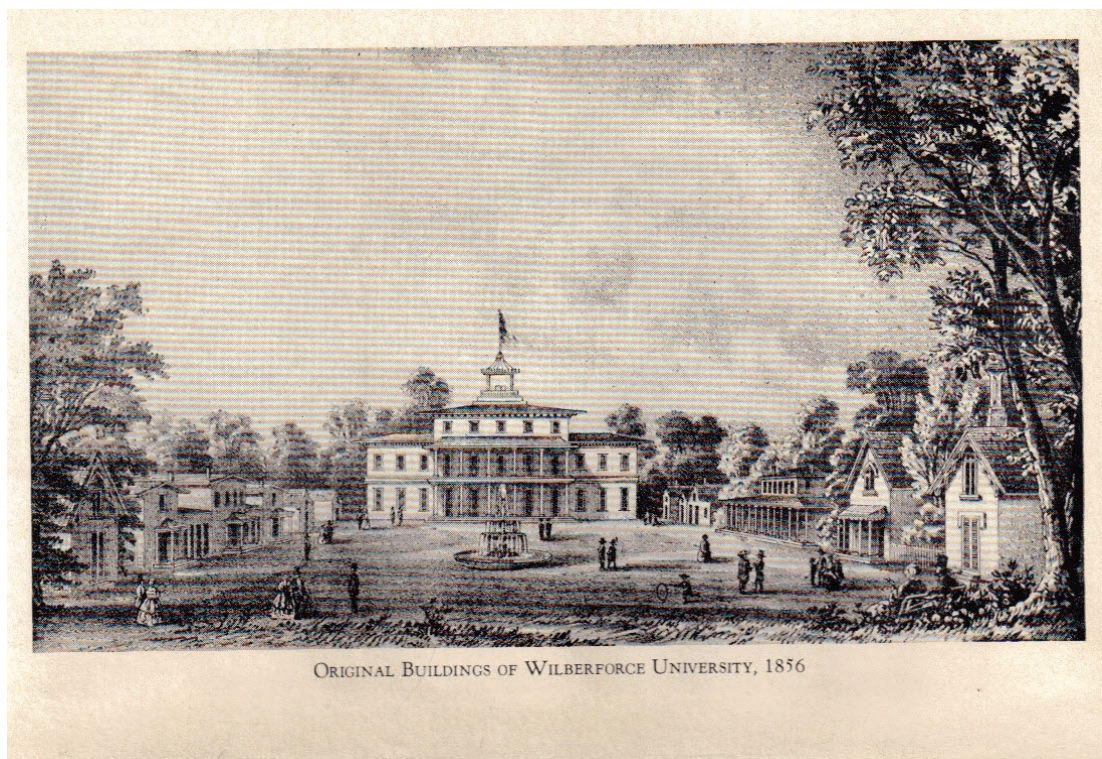


Figure 2.17. Unidentified artist, *Frontispiece Original Buildings of Wilberforce University, 1856*, as published in Frederick A. McGinnis, *A History and An Interpretation of Wilberforce University*, (The Brown Publishing Company: Blanchester, 1941).

This illustration is the only known image of Wilberforce University when it was purchased by the AME denomination. This campus is an example of how the denomination planned institutional expansion, which reached its peak during the 1880s and 1890s.

### **CHAPTER 3: ADORNING THE CATHEDRAL OF AFRICAN METHODISM: ASSESSING THE MATERIAL AND VISUAL LEGACY OF METROPOLITAN AME CHURCH**

One central aspect of this study focuses on how decorative objects extended the material tradition established with the erection of Metropolitan AME Church. This chapter will examine the ways in which these artifacts augmented the shared history of the site.<sup>1</sup> The sanctuary can be understood first and foremost as a sacred space as indicated by the material record. A secular function is also grafted onto the space from its earliest years. These two factors contribute to Metropolitan's significance in the African American material landscape, as a site committed to sustaining and promoting of African American cultural identity and self-determination. Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly offers a useful landscape-based analytical framework for exploring how material and visual strategies are central to expressions of marginal identity in Western societies. Tolia-Kelly suggests:

The visual and material elements of our lived daily lives are integral to our political, biological and sensory matrices of being and negotiation. These are accumulated knowledges that are corporal, habituated and felt, embedded in the rhythms, spaces and flows of our identities. The visual, material, temporal, geographical and sensory nodes of our identities are critical in a mapping of identity through power, body memory, biological identity and sense of place in the world... The need for a more triangulated approach to identity is promoted here, through coordinates of *living*, and through the visual and material cultures of the home as being cultural artefacts of diasporic heritage, this being critical to a domestic landscape of belonging.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will consider the material objects, alongside the written, visual and oral histories as coordinates in this multilayered articulation of African American identity. The accumulation of these experiences contributes to Metropolitan's prominence in various African American

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term shared history in this dissertation refers to the combination of local congregational history as well as the broader AME denominational historical narratives.

<sup>2</sup> Divya Praful Tolia-Kelly, *Landscape, Race, and Memory: Material Ecologies of Citizenship* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 12. The author italicized terms in the original publication.

religious, political and economic landscapes.<sup>3</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, the objects donated to this space engage in a material dialog that gives voice to the wider range of histories that shape this “cathedral of African Methodism.” The result is a dynamic archival interplay that documents W.E.B. Du Bois’s characterization of the Black church as a “social centre.”<sup>4</sup>

This chapter commences by contextualizing and defining the intervention of AME visual iconographies during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, the portraiture of denominational founder Bishop Richard Allen contested racist depictions of African Americans that circulated nationally in periodicals. Metropolitan AME Church’s material history represents effort to sustain a cultural practice and counter derogatory depictions of African Americans in American popular culture. As the denominational national church, Metropolitan AME houses a photographic collection of Episcopal portraiture that documents this legacy. Metropolitan AME Church reflects this denominational visual practice in a myriad of other ways as this chapter will demonstrate.

The chapter will move to trace the imagery that has developed over the life of the structure and its congregation. Across these visual sources, variations of portraiture, architectural imagery and views of interior spaces comprise this visual legacy concerned with conveying self-determination and elements of Classical Black Nationalism. This examination investigates archival photographs and images circulated in denominational publications as well as fine art objects housed in the church. Consideration will be given to how Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was represented in images of the architectural façade and interior photographs of the sanctuary.

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<sup>3</sup> Tolia-Kelly demonstrated the potential of the landscape approach to African American identity aims to chart material articulations of communal identity. Landscape is plural because these expressions can be configured according to theme or resource such as political, economic, religious, etc.

<sup>4</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois , “The African Methodists,” *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, Alton Pollard, ed. (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011), 3.

This object-based history will then turn to document the history of painting at Metropolitan AME Church. This heritage will be explored through analyzing the original stained-glass windows and decorative objects given to the congregation over the course of the twentieth century. The mural history of the sanctuary will be documented, culminating with the case of a church commission for a large scale mural of a Caucasian Christ, by an African American artist, Wallace Xavier Conway. The story behind this art initiative of the late 1950s provides an example of the underexplored instances of African American communities engaging in cultural production. It also gives voice to an artist who dedicated his entire career to design and the development of a distinctive aesthetic during the Black Power Movement. It is my intention to expand the discourse on African American art practice by introducing new figures whose names and indelible contributions go unrecognized in the dominant discourse. Moreover, by looking at alternative sites for artistic production like religious spaces, we can begin to understand the varied landscape that influenced African American art. What objects constitute this congregation's visual and material history? What do these objects reveal about the spiritual and material values espoused and upheld by this religious community? To answer these questions, the religious articles housed in the sanctuary and artifacts in the church's archival collection will be evaluated.

The latter portion of this chapter will consider the lived history of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. Beginning with Metropolitan's role as host site to the Bethel Historical and Literary Society to its reputation for political events of the African American community, this section will consider how the legacy of cultural self-determination is captured in the twentieth century visual record of this religious community. By the late twentieth century, Metropolitan becomes a highly contested space, torn between a rich history and the new construction patterns that were antagonistic to historic ecclesiastical structures. From the 1990s into the twenty-first century, the images of Metropolitan AME Church continue a narrative concerning the African American

condition that conveys complexities as it pertains to intraracial and class relations. This interrogation of the visual history bolsters and in some ways complicates the standard historical accounts of the AME denomination's national church.

**Toward an African Methodist Episcopal Iconography: Craftsman Narratives to Fine Art Traditions**

In order to contextualize Metropolitan AME Church's material impact, it is important to briefly propose and describe iconographies and visual motifs that have shaped the aesthetic tradition of the denomination. The AME denomination promoted a visual culture that was concerned with recording history through variations of portraiture alongside documentary photographs of places, spaces and events. The African Methodist Episcopal denomination was a leader among African American communities in art education and art patronage. When one considers the landscape of undocumented local artistic traditions, the extensive reach of the denomination, local and national in its nature, is difficult to quantify. Thematic patterns are apparent by identifying the similarities found in local and denominational artistic efforts. Based on the existing textual and object-based histories in archival holdings, A.M.E. iconographic categories include: varieties of portraiture, initiated by founder Bishop Richard Allen; church architecture imagery; and representations of religious interior spaces. This visual tradition is inseparable from the national denomination and local congregations from which they emerge. The result is a diverse network of AME art and architecture imagery that debunks narrow, conceptions of African American identity and cultural tradition.

African American religious practice and social life housed in the black church was visualized throughout the nineteenth century, building on an artistic practice of reinforcing America's racial caste system. Racial caricature common in nineteenth century popular culture

aimed to mock African American institutions like black religious communities and fraternal organizations. For instance, Pavel Patrovich Svinin's *Negro Methodist Holding a Meeting* (1818-1819) and the *Darktown Series* illustration, "The Initiation Ceremonies of the Darktown Lodge—Part First: The Grand Boss Charging the Candidate" demonstrate the image-based mechanics of white supremacist ideology at the time.

Patrovich Svinin's *Negro Methodist Holding a Meeting* represents the imagery that African Methodists were eager to counter and redefine.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 3.1) The artist depicts an African American congregation, identified as Methodist by the title, as a mass of gesticulating figures. Outfitted with typical vest and dress coat, the central elevated figure appears to be a caricature of African American clergy; perhaps a visual reference to the popularity of the Reverends Richard Allen and Absalom Jones during that period.<sup>6</sup> While the majority of faces in the crowd are not discernible, the few detailed figures reveal the artist's compliance with visual codes of racial stereotypes.

The artist emphasizes the hypersexualization of the black female body in the central group of three women that form an implied triangle. (Figure 3.2) The woman, standing upright in the white dress clutching her breast, is one of the milder of the representations. The diagonal line created by this figure's arm and leg is complemented by a central parallel line made by the

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<sup>5</sup>Hugh Honour, "The Art of Observation," *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, IV, Part 2, David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates, and Karen C. C. Dalton, eds. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012) 63-64.

<sup>6</sup>Absalom Jones is recognized as the cofounder of the Free African Society. In 1787, after walking out of St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Richard Allen and Jones organized the Free African Society. In 1792, Absalom Jones founded St. Thomas African Episcopal Church, the first Episcopalian congregation of African descent in the United States. Jones also became the first African American Episcopalian priest. For more information in Absalom Jones, see the following texts: Benjamin Brawley, "Richard Allen and Absalom Jones," *Negro Builders and Heroes*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937); Sidney Kaplan, and Emma Nogrady Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religious and Black Radicalism: an Interpretation of Religious History of African Americans*, third edition, (New York: Orbis Books, 1998).

outstretched arm of a topless woman. The artist highlights the topless woman by employing a dotted pattern for her dress. This partially nude smiling figure being pictured with her legs open is a compositional reversal of the ideal Western reclining nude. She is pictured as being toppled to the ground by a man. As if to document the social nuance of skin complexion in the African American community, the tan clothed woman points up to the topless figure.

Svinin even caricatures men in the margins of the composition. At the right edge of the watercolor painting, two figures appear distorted; seemingly scratching one's head and crouching like a primate. While the figures in the left portion of the image appear excited with what appears to be smiles, the group to the right bears facial expressions of confusion characterized by wide eyes and open mouths. What unites these two clusters is the vignette of sexual cues which the artist has situated at the center of the artwork.

*Negro Methodist Holding a Meeting* references the misconstruction of knowledge around religious frameworks and expressions of people of African descent. In addition to visually articulating the notion of African Americans as savages, Svinin also undermines the representation of African American institution building, placing activities outside of the confines of sacred space. This distortion of African American religious identity persisted throughout the century. In fact, as Metropolitan A.M.E. Church was under construction, Currier & Ives published Thomas Worth's lithograph "A Change of Base" in 1883. (Figure 3.3) This illustration pictures an African American preacher as a non-trustworthy, transient individual; the antithesis of the accountable religious and community leader.

As seen in the 1885 *Darktown Series* illustrations, by the late nineteenth century, stereotypical representations of African American institutions had been codified into symbols of dysfunction. (Figure 3.4) The image shows an African American Masonic community clumsily



conducting an initiation ritual. The composition shows caricatured figures, almost always emphasized by bright red lips, in a deteriorating lodge. Above the initiate riding the goat, the wall is adorned to mimic elaborate theatrical painted backdrops of Masonic ritual rooms.<sup>7</sup> Adjacent to this decoration, a portion of the wall is missing. This detail in this setting aims to address the cultural behaviors of middle and upper class African Americans who aimed to elevate the race through cultural refinement.<sup>8</sup> While the *Darktown Series* gained popularity in the late nineteenth century, it joined a tradition of racial stereotyping that had roots in the earlier half of that century.

Some of the earliest art to counter these racist depictions emerged from AME religious communities. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, both directly and indirectly, influenced, promoted and celebrated the visual efforts to undermine highly-circulated images that reify notions of racial superiority. This visual counter-narrative developed through both uncoordinated local instances and large scale denominational initiatives. Bishop Richard Allen initiated an institutional tradition of portraiture, as a means of visually historicizing the radical shift in African American identity facilitated by the denomination. Contesting the derogatory images of African Methodism that aimed to deflate the cultural and social validity of this historic religious community, Allen used portraiture as a means of redefining popular perception.

The pastel portrait of a young Allen, thought have been executed in 1785 during his visit to Baltimore for the inaugural Methodist Episcopal Conference, is the earliest known image of the denominational founder. (Figure 3.5) Although further interrogation has only convoluted the origin of this portrait, this image's production and provenance demonstrate how the AME

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<sup>7</sup> William D. Moore, *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Kinshasha Conwill and Lonnie G. Bunch, *Dream a World Anew: The African American Experience and the Shaping of America*, ( Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2016) 183. *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology: 300 Years of African American History* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005) 28. *The Black Washingtonian* cites 1825 as the founding date of the Grand Masonic Lodge of the District of Columbia by ten African American men.

denomination used visual culture as a means to augment a tradition of self-determination.<sup>9</sup>

According to James A. Porter, who was the son of an AME preacher, he took ownership of the portrait during his 1935 visit to Henry Ossawa Tanner's studio in Paris.<sup>10</sup> In *Modern Negro Art*, Porter recalls, "Tanner had obtained this work from his father, Bishop Henry Tucker Tanner of the A.M.E. church, who had written on the back of the frame: 'This portrait was executed in the twenty fifth year of the subject's life.'"<sup>11</sup> The physical journey of this object demonstrates the enduring commitment to using visual histories as a mean to document racial and spiritual advancement.<sup>12</sup>

Although the composition displays the conventional features of a quarter-length frontal portrait, the significance lies in the direct gaze of the sitter and the recognizable, "dignified garb of a roaming preacher [consisting of] a black waistcoat with a white scarf tied into a cravat."<sup>13</sup> In addition to donning the clerical uniform common among Methodist preachers, Allen's eyes became that feature that left a lasting impression on those he encountered. Henry Garnet Highland remarked that when fulfilling his ministerial duties, Allen's eyes, "...seemed ablaze

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<sup>9</sup> David Driskell, Introduction to James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943), (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992), xxx. Executed at the conclusion of the Age of Revolution, this portrait passed through the hands of some of the most influential figures in African American art. Building upon the exchange between two sons of the AME church, Henry O. Tanner to James A. Porter, another son of the denomination, David Driskell revised the standing historical knowledge of the object by highlighting the critical intervention of historian, Thomas C. Battle who establishes Gustavaus Warfield Hobbs (1825-1925) could not have been the artist of the 1785 portrait.

<sup>10</sup> James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943), (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992), 18.; "James Amos Porter," Dictionary of Art Historians: A Biographical Dictionary of Historic Scholar, Museum Professionals, and Academic Historians of Art <<https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/porterj.htm>> (accessed: March 3, 2015); Rev. John Porter's ministry is discussed in the following Christian Recorder citation: Correspondent, "Second Episcopal District News," *Christian Recorder*, 13 Nov 1902, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: March 30, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Porter, *Modern Negro Art*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> For more information about James A. Porter's relationship with Henry O. Tanner, see Constance Porter Uzelac, "James Amos Porter Meets Henry Ossawa Tanner," *International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 20 (2005).

<sup>13</sup> Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 50.

with a fire that attracted the attention of all who beheld them.”<sup>14</sup> Highland’s description interprets the best aspects of Allen’s character through his physical likeness, grafting a mythic description onto the physical form.<sup>15</sup> This leads one to conclude that the consistent reproduction of Allen’s likeness was a means of perpetuating this mythologized conception of the first Bishop, in both text and visual aids, imbued with racial pride.<sup>16</sup> Allen continued to explore portraiture’s potential to refine and re-present himself as the leading authority of the African Methodism.<sup>17</sup> Throughout his lifetime, Bishop Allen had several additional portraits executed, including an oil painting by Raphaelle Peale.<sup>18</sup> As emphasized in the standard African American art historical discourse, the significance of Bishop Allen’s portraits is their use in promoting a legacy of making visible symbols of resistance and redefinition.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Henry Garnet Highland, “Pioneers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Rev. Richard Allen, the First Bishop,” *Christian Recorder*, 20 Feb 1869, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 2, 2015). Highland’s reflections on Allen’s appearance were published in the *Christian Recorder* in 1869. He observes: “His temperament was sanguine, and his complexion was dark brown, and his skin was smooth. His hair was of a beautiful silver gray, loose and open. His eyes were the most remarkable portion of his person. . . Then he had a broad courageous chin, and a large finely shaped mouth that indicated a strong character and benevolence. Upon the whole, the features of the first African M.E. Church, were what might be termed of the beautiful negro type.”

<sup>15</sup> Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, 7. In fact, Richard S. Newman’s recent examination of Highland’s reflections on Allen’s physical presence credits Highland with acknowledging a shared knowledge of “Allen’s piercing gaze as an emblem of black confidence and pride.”

<sup>16</sup> This early instance of African American portraiture represents the black presence in the early formation of the American Methodist Episcopal movement as well as this religious body’s opposition to slavery.

<sup>17</sup> Highland; Newman, 6. In 1813, Allen had another portrait made, but this time the Bishop’s likeness was captured through the draftsmanship and detail of stippled engraving. Entitled *Rev. Richard Allen, Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America 1779*, this print incorporated decorative furnishings in the drapery behind him and the pillow on his lap. The sitter is rendered making a gestural reference to the Holy Bible as a means of communicating his role as spiritual guide and community leader. This image of Allen, echoes Henry Garnet Highland’s description of the leader as “foundly built, with a frame that indicated endurance and strength.”

<sup>18</sup> Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw and Emily K. Shubert, *Portraits of a People: Picturing African Americans in the Nineteenth Century* (Andover, Mass: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, 2006), 90. These images completed during Allen’s life bear a common triangular compositional formula, and the inclusion of symbol of his role as the spiritual leader of an African American community concerned with progress.

<sup>19</sup> David Driskell, “Introduction to 1992 edition, “*Modern Negro Art*, James Porter, author (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992) xxx. Bishop Allen’s portrait tradition was extended far beyond his death in 1830. Ten years after his death, P.S. Duval published an image that stands out as an outlier in

The A.M.E. denomination advanced the tradition of memorializing their founder's contribution through portraiture. In fact, the A.M.E. denomination made a critical intervention in this visual discourse by producing Allen's likeness across a range artistic media between 1876 and 1887. As the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition approached, A.M.E. leaders petitioned for the opportunity to participate in the festivities by materially honoring Bishop Richard Allen.<sup>20</sup> Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner advanced Bishop Allen's legacy proposing the construction of a monument that would support a bronze portrait bust of Allen. According to Historian William Seraile, the story of this monument demonstrates the active role African American religious communities maintained as artistic patrons. Seraile notes,

The cornerstone [of the monument] was laid in early June, with a dedicatory service planned for September 22, the fourteenth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Disaster struck when the train carrying the marble shaft to Allen's memory derailed en route from Cincinnati to Philadelphia. The shaft and the pride of African Methodism descended into the waters of the Susquehanna River. Fortunately, the Allen bust, which was carved in Italy, was not on the ill-fated trip, and it was unveiled before an enthusiastic gathering in Fairmount Park on November 12. Mrs. Frances E.W. Harper, the distinguished writer, read her dedicatory poem, "We Are Arising" to an appreciative audience.<sup>21</sup>

Frustrated by slow fundraising, the Arkansas Annual Conference commissioned the bust in marble. Cincinnati sculptor Alfred White crafted this portrait out of Carrara marble.<sup>22</sup> (Figure 3.6) The signature elements of Allen's portraiture remain prominent as seen in the detail of his

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representations of Allen. This image, along with Wagner & McGuigan Lithography Company's portrait in 1847, appears to represent the sitter in a manner that counters portraits from his lifetime. These posthumous portraits often render Bishop Allen thinner or distorted facial features and without a solid build.

<sup>20</sup> William Seraile, *Fire in His Heart: Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner and the A.M.E. Church*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 54. William Seraile's 1998 biographical study of Bishop Benjamin T. Tanner documents the difficulties of his two year campaign to fund this monument.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Stephan Salisbury, "Historic Bust of Richard Allen returns to Philadelphia," Philly.com, <[http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705\\_1\\_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders](http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705_1_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders)> (Accessed: March 8, 2015). In fact, recent research conducted by art historian Susanna Gold upon the sculpture's twenty first century return to Philadelphia, suggests this bust was the focal point of a larger installation. This large scale structure included a twenty-two foot high "gazebo like structure, with columns, arches, and decorative cherubs and angels."

attire as well as the textural contrast between his almond eyes and the curly hair. More akin to the 1785 pastel portrait, White's bust, measuring two feet in height, captures Bishop Allen during a time when he was most active in forming the AME denomination throughout the eastern seaboard. According to Gold, the memorial was the "first work of public art conceived and sponsored by African Americans."<sup>23</sup> The Bishop Richard Allen marble bust spoke for African American communities ensuring their advancement was made visible.<sup>24</sup>

Between 1886 and 1887, the AME community in Philadelphia rallied the Washington congregation to support the visual memorial efforts of the Centennial Anniversary of the AME Church, observed in all churches in November 1887. This celebration concluded with the presentation of a "Portrait of Bishop Allen, life-sized, executed by the colored artist---to be presented to the connection by Rev. C.T. Shaffer, through Bishop [Daniel] Payne."<sup>25</sup> The *Christian Recorder's* coverage of the actual event described the portrait as a crayon drawing by African American artist, Alfred Stidum (c. 1852-1917), received by Bishop Benjamin Arnett with an oratorical response.<sup>26</sup> Steven Loring Jones's groundbreaking study of early nineteenth century

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid; "Destruction of Allen Monument," *Christian Recorder*, 5 Oct 1876 as republished on Accessible Archives.; "Allen's Monument," *Christian Recorder*, 26 Oct 1876 as republished on Accessible Archives.; "Bishop Allen's Monument," *Christian Recorder*, 9 Nov 1876 as republished on Accessible Archives. The *Christian Recorder* documents the destruction of the original sculptural assemblage in a train accident and the unveiling of the salvaged bust on November 2, only eight days before the Exposition concluded on November 10. The 2010 installation of this portrait in the "Mother" Bethel AME Church Museum has resulted in historians rethinking the role material culture has played in representation when voices are seemingly silenced.

<sup>24</sup> Stephan Salisbury, "Historic Bust of Richard Allen returns to Philadelphia," Philly.com, <[http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705\\_1\\_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders](http://articles.philly.com/2010-06-11/news/24998705_1_bust-richard-allen-black-leaders)> (Accessed: March 8, 2015). During the late nineteenth century, this object would continue to memorialize Allen on the campus of Wilberforce University, more than likely in the university's art gallery, and possibly, later just up the road at the denomination's seminary, Payne Theological Seminary.

<sup>25</sup> "Program of the Great Centennial Celebration of the AME Church to be held in All the Churches..." *Christian Recorder*, 24 Nov 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database.

<sup>26</sup> "The Centennial Meeting in Bethel Church, Philadelphia" *Christian Recorder*, 1 Dec 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 4, 2015); Dickinson D. Bruce, Jr. *Black American Writing from the Nadir: the evolution of literary tradition, 1877-1915*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 17. Demonstrating his ability for multifaceted artistic expression, Stidum also contributed to the cultural life of the AME church by submitting a poem celebrating the legacy

African American artists in Philadelphia provides the most information on Alfred Stidum.<sup>27</sup> The presentation of Bishop Allen's portrait inspired the *Christian Recorder* author to declare Stidum a "great credit to his race."<sup>28</sup> In fact, the following year after its initial presentation, Stidum's portrait of Bishop Richard Allen was given to Wilberforce University during commencement activities and placed in the University reception room with the portraits of Bishop Daniel Payne and James Shorter.<sup>29</sup> Despite this extensive artistic relationship between Alfred B. Stidum and the AME church, the current location of Stidum's portrait of Bishop Allen remains unknown. The denomination cultivated a tradition of portraiture among African American artists such as Stidum through patronage and endorsements in AME spaces and literature.

The print portrait of Allen found in Metropolitan AME Church today is a reproduction of John Sartain's portrait of Bishop Allen. (Figure 3.7) It seems the composition's earliest appearance of this image may have been as the frontispiece for Bishop Daniel Payne's *A History*

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of slave rebellion, entitled "1620 to 1863," for publication in the *AME Review*. One line of the poem reads, "Deep within the smoldering embers of a crushed and beaten race, are stealing ever upward, though the fissures of some iron-heart, avenging flames./ Ahead the noble Gabriel, Turner, Vassey forged, to wrest the chains that held them captive, ere joined the hero, Brown, the martyred trio of illustrious names."

<sup>27</sup> Steven Loring, "A Keen Sense of the Artistic: African American Material Culture in the Nineteenth Century," *International Review of African American Art*, 12, No. 2, (1995): 23. Introduced as a classmate of Henry O. Tanner at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine art, Stidum was a successful portrait artist, with a consistent stream of AME patrons during the late nineteenth century.

<sup>28</sup> "Program of the Great Centennial Celebration of the AME Church to be held in All the Churches..." *Christian Recorder*, 24 Nov 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 4, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> "The Centennial Meeting in Bethel Church, Philadelphia" *Christian Recorder*, 1 Dec 1887, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 4, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> "Editorial Correspondence: The Wilberforce Commencement," *Christian Recorder*, 5 Jul 1888, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 4, 2015); Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, 1st Bishop of the African M. E. Church," engraving by John Sartain, New York Public Library Digital Collections <<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-7656-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>> (Accessed: March 30, 2015); Unidentified Author, "The Death-Bed of John Wesley," *Christian Recorder*, 1 Mar 1862, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 6, 2015). In 1867, the *Christian Recorder* advertised the sale of reproductions of Sartain's image of the Rev. John Wesley's death scene. Indicating the prestige Sartain brought to a commission, a *Christian Recorder* writer stated in 1867, "the death-bed scene of the Rev. John Wesley and of Rev. Richard Allen ought to be in the home of every religious family..." Perhaps Payne fulfilled this call and commissioned Sartain to create the frontispiece.

*of the African Methodist Church*, published in 1891. Church oral and textual histories do not record exactly how and when Metropolitan AME received what appears to be an enlarged, cropped reproduction, housed in an ornate gold frame. The only clue to Metropolitan's Allen portrait is the suggestion of the tradition that each Bishop's family donates a portrait to the church as indicated on the church's "Gift List."<sup>30</sup> A 1938 Scurlock Studios photograph of the Metropolitan Church Choir in the sanctuary illustrates the prominent location the portrait occupied, to the right of the chancel arch. (Figure 3.8) Metropolitan AME Church placed the image of Allen facing the Episcopal Rose Window and the congregation thus establishing an image-text relationship, emphasizing the centrality of the founding Bishop.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to encouraging a fine art aesthetic informed by an African American cultural history, the AME denomination used portraiture to promote the ideal morals and values of the religious community. Henry Garnet Highland remarked: "In a word, Bishop Allen was in personal appearance, just what a man of his standing should be—a refined, courteous, dignified, Christian gentleman. The large steel plate portrait of him, published in his lifetime, is an accurate likeness and the writer rejoices in having a copy, which he would not exchange for a masterpiece of Rubens."<sup>32</sup> With this recollection, the writer describes the material relationship with this art object and suggests what its meaning may have been for the congregations and AME spaces that incorporated Allen's portrait into their sanctuaries. An additional use of Allen's likeness on

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<sup>30</sup> Unidentified Author, "List of Gift for Use in the Church," Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 6-69, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>31</sup> Today, Metropolitan AME Church's Sartain print hangs alongside the collection of Bishop portraits in the church conference room.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Garnet Highland, "Pioneers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Rev. Richard Allen, the First Bishop," *Christian Recorder*, 20 Feb 1869, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: April 2, 2015). Highland's statement confirms that Bishop Allen had a reproducible portrait, perhaps an engraving, completed during his lifetime.

official denominational and church documents indicates the portrait also served as a visual symbol for the authority of the Episcopacy as represented by the first AME bishop.<sup>33</sup>

Further exploration of Allen's posthumous portraiture reveals his image's placement alongside images of subsequent bishops. Metropolitan AME Church amassed a collection of photographic portraits of AME Bishops, donated to the church at the time of each bishop's death.<sup>34</sup> Because of the original framing of the older portraits, all branding markers that identify photographer or studio have been covered. The story of the photographers behind this Episcopal portrait collection offers insight into the types of photographic studios this national religious community patronized. Moreover, this photographic archive also reinforces the fact that AME clergy, laymen and laywomen also used photography and Victorian conventions to frame their representation. Metropolitan's Episcopal Portrait Collection represents almost every Bishop ever elected. Several of the portraits from the late nineteenth century share compositional similarities that suggest they were taken in the same photographic studio. For example, the portrait Bishop Benjamin Arnett shares compositional similarities with the portraits of Bishops Henry McNeal Turner and Benjamin Tucker Tanner.<sup>35</sup> (Figure 3.9) They all show the sitter posed in the same finely carved chair, recognizable by the curve back and bulbous ornamentation on the arms. This subset of images, united by the seated figure in a Victorian chair against bare background,

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<sup>33</sup> This visual tradition may reflect the influence of broader American practice of memorializing heroes and founding icons established with "the cult of Washington" in the era after the American Revolution. Both the archives of "Mother" Bethel AME Church and the collections of Metropolitan contain lay delegate general conference certificates that bear the face of Bishop Allen. John A. Simms Sr.'s 1904 certificate uses an etched rendering of Allen and lay delegate certificate from 1916, on display at "Mother" Bethel's museum, shows the use of Sartain's portrait, encased in a subtle oval frame. Over time, the portrait of Allen accumulated layers of significance and symbolic meaning that birthed a visual tradition of AME Episcopal portraiture.

<sup>34</sup> Unidentified Author, "List of Gift for Use in the Church," Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 6-69, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. There is no information on the origins of the portraits of bishops who died before Metropolitan AME Church's completion in 1886.

<sup>35</sup> This subset of photographs as produced some time from the 1880s but no later than 1905, as Bishop Arnett died in 1906.



suggests the leadership of the AME denomination during the late nineteenth century understood the transformative potential of photographic portraiture.

### **Architectural Iconographies: Elevations and Sanctuaries**

An additional AME visual motif that developed before the photographic lens centers on architectural iconography. As the denomination became more aware of its social, spiritual and physical stature, the denomination employed images of church structures to attest to its material accomplishments. Visual representation was integral to fundraising efforts for Metropolitan Church. *The Christian Recorder* included an illustration of the structure in 1886, in celebration of the upcoming dedication of the sanctuary.<sup>36</sup> (Figure 3.10) A signature at the lower right corner bears the letters: Folger Sc. Cin.<sup>37</sup> Using formal elements to communicate Gothic Revival characteristics, the artist employs the pointed-arch to establish repetition in shape and value to emphasize the memorial stained glass windows. The artist translates the chromatic interplay of the red brick and white granite through hatching and stippling.<sup>38</sup> In the 1906, the church newspaper, *The Bethel-Metropolitan Church Organ*, featured a frontal elevation of the structure. (Figure 3.11) This image retains the formal similarities of the first drawing in its cropped, isolated view, the imposing scale and Gothic Revival details of granite tracery, buttresses and stained-glass windows. Whereas the illustration isolates the church from the other structures surrounding it on M Street, the earliest photograph of the structure, captured by Frederick Douglass's grandson, Charles F. Douglass in the early 1880s, presents Metropolitan as flanked by two smaller buildings. (Figure 3.12) These early representations of Metropolitan AME Church

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<sup>36</sup> This image appears to be the same illustration identified as the earliest representation of the church by church members and in archival documentation.

<sup>37</sup> Archival sources describe this image as a pen illustration, although it appears to be a lithograph. It is possible that this could identify the printmaker, B.L.B Folger of Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>38</sup> James Handy's 1902 publication, *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History*, used this lithograph.

inaugurated a practice of using the church's likeness to communicate ideas concerning the congregation and the AME denomination.

The photograph of the exterior of Metropolitan by Charles F. Douglass, taken at an angle as a part of an urban landscape, is housed in the Frederick Douglass House, Cedar Hill, in Anacostia, Southeast Washington, DC.<sup>39</sup> (Figure 3.12) A reproduction of this image bears the inscription, "By C. F. Lewis Douglass, 771 12 Street, SE." On February 29, 1888, *The Washington Post* reported on a grand celebration for Frederick Douglass's birthday, hosted by the Bethel Literary and Historical Society at Metropolitan AME Church.<sup>40</sup> The account states several organizations presented Douglass with gifts noting the "the school children, the infant class, presented [him with] two handsomely framed pictures of the church taken by [the son of the] the late Fred Douglass, Jr."<sup>41</sup> This account also explains that the church presented an additional photograph of the interior of the sanctuary to Douglass that he hung in the west parlor.<sup>42</sup> The inclusion of these photographs in Douglass's highly orchestrated Victorian home confirms its material and visual currency of Metropolitan AME Church in expressing African American progress and achievement.

This case study of Metropolitan AME Church began by considering the inclusion of a photograph of the church in the "Negro Exhibit" in the 1900 Paris Exposition. (Figure 2.1) The photograph of Metropolitan Church included in the Paris Exposition relies on a frontal view of the façade to convey the structure as a Gothic Revival monumental, "commodious" building.

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<sup>39</sup> Several myths have developed about the origins of the photographs in Douglass's home, one suggesting the image shows the church the day of his funeral.

<sup>40</sup> "The Historic Metropolitan AME Church," Collection of Thelma D. Jacobs (Private collection), Lanham, Maryland.

<sup>41</sup> Unidentified Author, "Frederick Douglass Honored: His Birthday Fittingly Celebrated," *Washington Post*, 29 Feb 1888, 3, *Washington Post* 1877-ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed: April 26, 2015). This article seems to have misrepresented the photographer, attributing Frederick Douglass's "late son" Frederick Douglass, Jr., who was alive. It is more likely that his grandson, whose name is printed on the reproduction, captured and printed these photographs.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Sustaining compositional features of the aforementioned images of the church, the photograph includes the roof of a carriage and a person to convey scale. The Gothic Revival structure rises behind the barren tree that occupies the middle ground. The irregularity of the tree visually reinforces the order established in the asymmetrical façade of the church. Rhythm is created through the arrangement of angular geometric shapes emphasized through variations in value. In converting the red pressed brick and white granite into grayscale tones of black and white photography, the sculptural entry bays and the deeply inset stained-glass windows convey value and the structure's imposing mass. Although the photograph remains unattributed, this image stands apart from earlier photographs in terms of the aesthetic sensitivity. Using light and shadows to emphasize architectural details, the photographer documents, with piercing clarity, the trefoil details above the lancet windows in the tower.

In the same way that photographs of the church's exterior asserted the congregation's national significance, images of the interior AME spaces proved equally as effective in representing this religious community. For instance, as early as 1876, AME minister John H.W. Burley composed this lithographic print entitled, *Bishops of the AME Church*. (Figure 3.13) The small square vignette in the lower left corner features an artistic rendering of the first Mother Bethel, located in the repurposed blacksmith shop in Philadelphia.<sup>43</sup> Akin to the early portraits of Allen and AME pioneers, Burley's composition aims to commemorate the organization and correct the prejudicial images of African American religious practice.<sup>44</sup> This motif was further explored in Meta Warrick Fuller's diorama, "The Warrick Tableaux," for the 1907 Negro

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<sup>43</sup> Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, 244. The windowless structure is illuminated by the doorway, highlighting the preacher, the anvil which would become the symbol of the denomination, and the congregation made up of predominantly women and children.

<sup>44</sup> G.F. Richings, *Evidence of Progress among Colored People*, (Philadelphia: George S. Ferguson Company, 1902) 376, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/richings/richings.html#richi117>> (accessed: September 1, 2014). This image would be republished in G.F. Richings *Evidence of Progress among Colored People* (1902).

Building of the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition.<sup>45</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, like many other AME churches across the nation in the twentieth century, began to photographically document the social and spiritual life unfolding within the walls of the church as a testament to their equality.

The earliest photographs of Metropolitan's interior spaces are undated but were possibly produced in the 1880s. This interior photograph of the church taken by Charles F. Douglass shows the early sanctuary, replete with architectural ornamentation and void of people. (Figure 3.14) In 1906, Addison Scurlock photographed the local musical group, the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society at Metropolitan AME Church. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), a British musical prodigy of African descent, was heralded as one of the great classical figures on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>46</sup> The 1906 photograph of Metropolitan Church's sanctuary shows the composer sitting with arms crossed in the front of the orchestra.<sup>47</sup> The stage elevated members of the chorale society to the height of the gallery. Similar to other images of

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<sup>45</sup> Renee Ater "Segregation and Inclusion," *Remaking Race and History: the sculpture of Meta Warrick Fuller*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 39.; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Meta Warrick's 1907 'Negro Tableaux' and (Re)Presenting African American Historical Memory," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 89 (March 2003):1368-1400. Art historian, Renee Ater, describes the intent behind visualizing African American spaces. Ater states, "In her dioramas, Fuller asserted the important of improved surroundings through such institutions as churches, schools and homes, on black life. She proposed that in the creation and support of these institutions indicated a high level of culture, another aspect of Progressive era discourse. Fuller equated the clothed body with modernity, refinement and respectability." Echoing Burley's images, Meta Warrick Fuller recreated the early worship space as including the denominational symbol of an anvil and maintaining the congregational composition of women and children.

<sup>46</sup> "The S. Coleridge Taylor Choral Society 'Hiawatha' Program," Simms Family Papers, 2-67, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. In fact he travelled throughout the east coast, including DC, performing his cantatas, *Hiawatha*, and Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry set to his musical compositions. Two year before the Metropolitan performance, John A. Simms attended a performance of the S. Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society under the direction Coleridge-Taylor himself, at Convention Hall.

<sup>47</sup> Reproduction of Addison Scurlock, *The S. Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society, Nov. '06*, 1906, Special Collections, Royal College of Music, London, UK. Reproduction from private collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD. This photograph documents the adaptations to the space that enabled the church to host large operatic performances. These occasions prompted the addition of a multi-tiered choir loft behind the pulpit. This addition was designed by African American architect John Lankford. This documents the impetus for Lankford's 1920 renovations which added a multitier choir loft behind the pulpit

Metropolitan's sanctuary, the people in the photograph appeared as orderly and refined, seen in formal clothing and holding orchestral instruments.<sup>48</sup> This tradition of performance was cultivated throughout the twentieth century with figure such as Leontyne Price (1927- ). The genteel performance of classical music demonstrated a cultural refinement that echoed with the refines aspirations of Classical Black Nationalism.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Material Life of Metropolitan AME Church: an object-based historical account**

Metropolitan AME houses material artifacts that document a history of aesthetic selection and African American cultural affirmation. From its completion in 1886, Metropolitan's decorative program, including a stained glass window campaign and subsequent mural projects, has evolved to reflect local innovations and denominational expressions. This examination will also consider the additional decorative object such as a pair of candelabras gifted by Frederick Douglass, pew name plates and a collection of symbolic objects including a rare book library and metal anvil. These artifacts attest to a material history that augments the standing narrative about this religious community.

Metropolitan AME Church's stained glass windows can be considered the earliest gifts to the congregation, as they were installed with the opening of the sanctuary.<sup>50</sup> Each AME conference that fiscally contributed to build Metropolitan Church would be nominally represented

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<sup>48</sup> Addison Scurlock, "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor choral society, Nov. '06," (photograph), Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Collection, photographic reproduction in the Collection of Thelma Jacob, Lanham, MD. This photograph is housed in the archival collection at London's Royal College of Music, where Coleridge-Taylor was trained.

<sup>49</sup> "Amusements: Miss Flora Batson," *The Washington Bee*, 14 Feb 1891, Library of Congress. This photograph also shows the frescoing detail of Gothic trefoils, with an opened Bible in the central circle. Coleridge-Taylor advanced a rich tradition of musical performances. As early as 1891, singer Flora Batson performed at Metropolitan AME Church.

<sup>50</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 2, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

in the stained-glass designs.<sup>51</sup> Writing from his position as denominational financial secretary in 1886, the Rev. Benjamin Arnett identifies himself as the mind behind Metropolitan's stained-glass windows with these words: "It became my duty to select the designs, to arrange the inscriptions and to superintend that branch of the work."<sup>52</sup> From Arnett's words, one can deduce he selected Baltimore area, German-born stained-glass window artist, H.F. Gernhardt.<sup>53</sup> Arnett used the brilliant bold stained glass program and arranged it according to African Methodist Episcopal hierarchies and belief systems. While the intricacies of their collaboration remain unknown, this story provides a previously unexplored example of African American communities exercising fiscal and aesthetic agency.

The extensive stained glass window program formally connects this congregation to the larger AME denomination that had undergone a surge in membership following the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>54</sup> Gernhardt seemed to have consistently received requests from religious communities as indicated by his work in Exeter Meeting House (1850), St. Paul's Presbyterian

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<sup>51</sup> The original plan proposed by AME Bishops also envisioned AME Conferences as also pledging to purchase a pew in the church.

<sup>52</sup> Denominational correspondence from Rev. Benjamin Arnett included in Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 2, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C. Perhaps this service to the church, in the form of symbolic visual design, helped secure his consideration for the church's highest leadership role, as he was elected Bishop two years after Metropolitan's completion.

<sup>53</sup> Commission on Fine Arts, Koehler and Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2.* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 230. This source identifies H.F. Gernhardt as the stained glass artist. The stained glass windows are commonly associated with the style and materials of nineteenth century German stained glass traditions.

<sup>54</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The African Methodists," *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, Alton Pollard, ed.(Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011), 166.; Building Committee Ledger, "Supplemental Contracts," Metropolitan AME Church papers, 4-51, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; National Park Service, "The Hampton Mansion National Historic Site,"

<[http://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/hampton/house\\_tour.html](http://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/hampton/house_tour.html)> (accessed February 4, 2015). One of his earliest commissions included a stained-glass coat of arms window installed at the eighteenth century home of Captain Charles Ridgley, dated to 1856. Although very little has been written about Gernhardt by decorative art historians, a National Register of Historic Places application for Church of the Holy Trinity in Harford County, MD provides the most extensive information in an endnote. Gernhardt established one of the few stained-glass studios that would remain open until the 1940s.

Church in Somerset County, PA (1876), Church of the Holy Trinity in Churchville, MD (formerly Harford County) (1878), St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Washington, D.C., erected 1874-1876), Mount Zion Methodist Church (Georgetown, Washington, DC, erected 1876-1884), and Metropolitan AME Church (1881-1886).<sup>55</sup> In fact, by the early 1890's, Gernhardt's advertisements presented him as an "Artist in Venetian Jeweled Glass," who specialized in "memorial and other windows."<sup>56</sup> The earliest history of Metropolitan's stained-glass windows refers to them as memorial windows.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to pictorial compositions that came to typify late nineteenth century American stained-glass windows, Gernhardt's Metropolitan design program is dominated by arabesque, floral patterns and Christian symbols. (Figure 3.15) The 1876 Centennial Exposition, a watershed event that impacted fine and decorative arts, celebrated these European patterns in stained glass design.<sup>58</sup> Metropolitan's stained-glass windows reflect the aesthetic taste for the appropriate use of the art media, as outlined in contemporary decorative literature. In the September 1884 issue of *The Decorator and Furnisher*, an unidentified contributor stated:

The stained windows of a church should convey an impression of dignity and repose...Leading stained glass decorators state that the aggregate value of their orders for churches are greater than for private residences. A good portion of these orders are memorial windows, on many of which no ordinary amount of skill has been lavished. The symbolic and conventional treatment appropriate to them allows scope for the display in these windows of a great amount of ideal beauty.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> National Park Service, "Historic American Building Survey: Evergreen Library and Museum (Baltimore)," <<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/md/md1600/md1633/data/md1633data.pdf>> (accessed: January 29, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> *Our Church Paper*, Volume 19, 11 February 1891, <<http://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=d&d=OCP18910211.1.3>> (accessed: January 27, 2014)

<sup>57</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 5, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

<sup>58</sup> H. Weber Wilson, *Great Glass in American Architecture: Decorative Windows and Doors before 1920* (New York: E.P Dutton, 1986), 42.

<sup>59</sup> Unidentified author "Stained Glass," *The Decorator and Furnishers*, Vol. 4, No. 6, Sept 1884: 209-210.

Variation in floral patterns, ranging from small vine tracery to symmetrical floral pendants united Gernhardt's geometric designs.<sup>60</sup> Employing the figurative only for symbolic purposes, Metropolitan's stained glass windows stands apart from other stylistic developments such as the pictorial aesthetic of John La Farge in his work at Trinity Church in Boston (1877-78) and Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea in Greenburgh, New York (1883).<sup>61</sup>

The placement of each window creates a symbolic terrain where AME history is enumerated through text, organic pattern and symbol. Using recognizable artistic motifs, Arnett and Gernhardt narrate African American religious progress using Protestant, Victorian stylistic vocabularies. Thus, the authors reinterpret popular systems by investing them with additional connotations. The intended audience would not only be the members of Metropolitan and the AME denomination, but also the historic list of American leaders associated with the congregation. The arrangement of the windows, beginning with The Episcopal Rose Window, reflect the organizational hierarchy of the denomination.(Figure 3.16) The Episcopal Rose Window, which faces the pulpit, features circular medallion forms. The names and dates of the early bishops radiate from the central segment that bears the denominational founder's name, Bishop Richard Allen.<sup>62</sup> Bishop Allen's name, ordination date and year of death are at the center of the rose window, anchoring the first fourteen bishops' names in radiating segments. The years of Methodism's founding in the United States and the incorporation of the A.M.E. denomination

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<sup>60</sup> Wilson, *Great Glass in American Architecture: Decorative Windows and Doors before 1920*, 30-31.

<sup>61</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 7, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.; Ruby M. Gourdine, Carolyn McClain et al. *Metropolitan's Stained Glass Windows: A Journey through A.M.E. History* (Washington D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church Commission on Public Relations, 2004).

<sup>62</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Victorian Decorative Design* (1873), (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 153-155. These textual inscriptions compliment the floral motifs, characteristic of what was considered appropriate for sacred architectural adornment during the late nineteenth century.



are commemorated in the smaller circular forms beneath the rose window.<sup>63</sup> What is particularly interesting about Metropolitan AMEC's stained-glass window program is the absence of figurative representation in the visual documentation of the denomination. Constructed about five years after Metropolitan, 'Mother' Bethel AME Church, the denominational "Mother" church in Philadelphia, boasts a stained-glass program that includes the image of Christ.<sup>64</sup> (Figure 3.17)

The design of Metropolitan's Episcopal Window may have been influenced by other denominational aesthetic precedents. The Episcopal Rose Window's design shares compositional similarities with an 1876 engraving by A.M.E. minister John H. W. Burley.<sup>65</sup> (Figure 3.18) In a vignette format that was common in late nineteenth century publications such as *Harper's Weekly*, Allen is identified by his name and represented, larger in scale, with a laurel-like frame. This portrait is surrounded by early bishops and the early spaces that defined African Methodism.<sup>66</sup> This widely circulated lithographic print could have served as a visual precedent for Metropolitan's Episcopal Rose Window. A photograph of Metropolitan in the 1940s shows a latter generation building on the visual program by hanging a portrait lithograph of Allen to the right of the pulpit, possibly rearticulating the history of Metropolitan as a "national" pulpit, frequently graced by Bishops.

The Episcopal Rose Window is supported by a row of three pointed arch windows that bear the names of the denominational administrative departments. Directly under the rose

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<sup>63</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 7, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

<sup>64</sup> The congregation would augment this figural tradition by commemorating Bishop Allen with a stained-glass portrait, added some years later.

<sup>65</sup> Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html> > (accessed: March 19, 2015) Burley is identified as serving as the first Financial Secretary of the denomination in 1872, according to Wright's Centennial Encyclopedia. This entry also included a portrait of the Rev. Burley.

<sup>66</sup> These AME spaces that came to typify institutional developments include Payne Institute, Wilberforce University, the A.M.E. Book Depository and Haiti Missions.

window, corner brackets and trefoils center and frame memorial windows for the Educational Department, Missionary Department and Sunday School Department. (Figure 3.19) Formally articulating the unity of their mission, the Education Department and the Sunday School Department share the exact same composition as seen in the contrasting blue hues and geometric patterns. The central window, dedicated to the Missionary Department, emphasizes the triangular and circular elements in the blue intertwined concave triangle and red semi-circle tracery that dominates this window. (Figure 3.20) To the left of this central group, the Publication Department window visually confirms a legacy of literacy promotion extending as far back as 1826. The other window to the right bears the name of the Financial Department and Wilberforce University. This pairing of the Financial Department and Wilberforce University is a material reminder of the shared vision of the Episcopacy as molded by Bishop Daniel Payne and the financial secretary, the Rev. Benjamin Arnett.

The windows that line the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Street walls of the church feature a variety of colorful Christian symbols crowning the names of contributing AME Conferences, spelled out in neutral beige tones.<sup>67</sup> Arnett seems to have placed the pioneering and catalytic conferences closest to the Episcopal Window. For instance, the first double lancet window on the Sixteenth Street wall, features the two oldest AME Conferences on the bottom sash: the Philadelphia and Baltimore Conferences. Above these names, the Illinois and Alabama Conferences were paired with the intention of representing Western and Southern expansion.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The analysis that follows differs from previous sources that document the program by offering an interpretation of the metaphorical content of the program as it relates to the era of denominational expansion. In most cases, the names of four conferences are paired with a framed Christian symbol, centered at the pinnacle of the pointed arch.

<sup>68</sup> Unidentified Author and illustrator, *Denominational History*, n.d., Jones Family Collection (Private Collection), Dayton, Ohio. This document identifies the four significance Bishops often referred to as the Four Horsemen: Bishops Richard Allen, Daniel Payne, William Paul Quinn and Henry McNeal Turner.

This design communicates how the conferences forged by the pioneering bishops continue to influence the AME landscape.<sup>69</sup>

An image of the Bible is the symbol that caps the aforementioned window on Sixteenth Street. A church publication interprets the symbol with the following passage: “The Book of which God is The Author, and which teaches the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering and the most comfortable way of dying.”<sup>70</sup> The narrative that emerges around this symbol highlights the Bible as an instructional tool and a communicative conduit for divine revelation. In Vincent L. Wimbush’s essay “Introduction: The Bible as Language-World,” the author argues for a more dynamic understanding of this object in the context of the African American experience.

Wimbush states:

In the setting that was understood to be partly biblically inspired, the violently secured “New World”—when “New Israel” that would become the United States—the Bible was the single most important centering object for social identity and orientation among European dominants...It quickly came to function as a language-world, the storehouse of rhetoric, images, and stories, that, through a complex history of engagements, helped establish African Americans as *a circle of biblical imaginary*. It helped a people imagine themselves as something other, in another world, different from what their immediate situation reflected or demanded.”<sup>71</sup>

In this context, that representation of the Bible stands as a symbolic marker of how generations were preserved through refining communal religious philosophies. It also reinforced the literary legacy people of color exercise in opposition to socialized racial prejudice.

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<sup>69</sup>Historic American Building Survey, Engineering Record and Landscape Survey, “Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church, 2401 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Cook County, IL, (HABS ILL,16-CHIG,168-)” Library of Congress, < <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/il0843/>> (accessed: March 5, 2014). Chicago will soon see the erection of a church touting a modern architectural style with the completion of Quinn Chapel AME Church in Chicago in the early 1920s.

<sup>70</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, “The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.,” 7, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

<sup>71</sup> Vincent L. Wimbush, “Introduction: The Bible as Language-World,” *From Ashe to Amen: African Americans and Biblical Imagery*, (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2013), 22.

The image-text relationship in some cases could even convey spiritual sentiments of protection. In some cases, the symbols contain polyvalent meanings that often characterize the states or territories of AME congregants that need divine protection. For example, the ark, “a symbol of faith and refuge,” safeguards the southern conferences of Northern Mississippi, Eastern Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina. (Figure 3.21) The All Seeing Eye that looms over Ohio, New Jersey, New York and Northern Georgia is another example on the Fifteenth Street Wall.<sup>72</sup> (Figure 3.22) While this symbol may represent protection, a 1920s interpretation characterized it as representing universal observation.<sup>73</sup> With this in mind, this could possibly be interpreted as four conferences that should be watched and studied for their success in housing influential AME institutions like Wilberforce University in Ohio or the large population of AME members from churches throughout New York and New Jersey.<sup>74</sup>

Metropolitan AME Church’s decorative glass program maintains its local heritage while also articulating a collective identity as the denomination’s national church. Although the pattern of each window corresponds with the window across from it on the opposite wall, Gernhardt varies the color scheme, uniting the program by contrasting saturated hues with neutral tones. Two specific windows distinguish themselves from the cohesive program. These two windows differ with regard to shape: the circular window in the Fifteenth Street wall in honor of the West Arkansas and Ontario, Canada Conferences and the wide pointed arch Macon, Georgia Conference memorial window on the Sixteenth street wall. The circular window represents the

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<sup>72</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, “The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.,” 8, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>74</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois , “The African Methodists,” *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University ; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903*, Alton Pollard, ed.(Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011), 166.

This study states both New Jersey and New York was home to almost 9,000 AME members, according to the 1890 census. The 1890 census reported over 10,000 members of the denomination resided in Ohio and listed 73,248 communicants across Georgia.

expansion of the denomination in both southern capitals such as Charleston, South Carolina and new centers in the African Diaspora such as Canada, Haiti and Liberia. (Figure 3.23) With regards to the aforementioned circular window, the geometric rhythm of the circular pendants and the diamond shapes, comprise three alternating layers. The ornate medallions alongside the purple and red petal-like, Y-shaped form in the pointed segment of the arch create three layers of distinct pattern. From their origins as a denominational gesture to serving as an “informative, didactic tool,” the stained glass window program reflected the aesthetic taste of the time. Because of style and narrative, the windows immediately entered AME discourse.<sup>75</sup>

Following Metropolitan AME Church’s dedication, the stained glass windows entered the written history of the denomination. On June 1, 1886, the Rev. Benjamin Arnett describes the importance of the stained-glass program in an open letter to the denomination with these words:

The windows are memorial and contain the names of the several annual conferences. It became my duty to select the designs, to arrange the inscriptions and to superintend that branch of the work. One of them is dedicated to the Episcopacy; One to each of the departments of the Church. So anyone can have an opportunity to observe the rise and progress of the church by reading the windows. The plan was that each annual conference contributes \$100 to pay for the windows and provide them with wire screens, etc. The work has been done, and well done, by the Contractor. He was somewhat disappointed at the response at the dedication from the conferences... We did what we have in good faith, believing that each conference will do the best it could do to help us. It is the largest church in the Connection. It is worthy of the great Church that we represent—the largest organized body of Negroes in the world. The building is a monument to the love of the race, for the Church of God, and for the good of man.<sup>76</sup>

The author clearly states the function of the program and the intended message. This correspondence initiates a series of written reflections and histories on Metropolitan AME Church’s stained glass design.

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<sup>75</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, “The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.,” 8, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

The church archival sources show the earliest history of the window program was published by the church in the early twentieth century. Written by Metropolitan member Jefferson S. Coage, the document brought together important correspondences and outlines a Union Bethel-centered account of Metropolitan's birth. Coage, a government professional and graduate of Wilberforce and Howard universities, puts forth a succinct explanation of each symbol.<sup>77</sup> This history maps the location of each conference that contributed. This account concludes by poetically noting, "Every Sunday morning the congregation of Metropolitan Church, the great soul-saving station of African Methodism in the greatest city on the globe, observes the very colors of the rainbow and the many tints produced by the blending of those hues in the windows of their church."<sup>78</sup> Thelma Jacobs suggests the Sixteenth Street wall represents denominational growth prior to the Civil War with the subsequent growth expressed in the Fifteenth Street wall.<sup>79</sup> This was an effort to commemorate an integral aspect of Metropolitan's decorative aesthetic; a different tradition would evolve with each new generation.

Building upon a rich gifting tradition developed in Israel Bethel Church and Union Bethel Church, Metropolitan's generous members and friends of the congregation often reflected

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<sup>77</sup> Coage, "Letter from Jefferson S. Coage to W. E. B. Du Bois, October 9, 1930" W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, MS 312, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, <<http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/pageturn/mums312-b184-i438/#page/1/mode/1up>> (accessed: April 3, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Jefferson S. Coage, "The History of the Memorial Windows: Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.," 8, Simms Family Papers, 2-45, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C. One of the major contributions of the 2004 text is the task of analyzing the overall topical organization of the side walls. More importantly, color reproductions of each window were included, offering an image-text exchange that enhances the program. After the restoration of the several of decorative windows in 2004, Metropolitan's Commission on Public Relations reprinted the greater portion of Coage's text alongside high quality color photographs of each window.

<sup>79</sup> Ruby M. Gourdine, Carolyn McClain et al. *Metropolitan's Stained Glass Windows: A Journey through A.M.E. History* (Washington D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church Commission on Public Relations, 2004) 18, 24. My interpretation of the stained-glass programs augments the history by Coage and Jacobs et al (2004), by considering art historical aspects of the historical account.

an interest in enhancing this large, commodious space.<sup>80</sup> Metropolitan also houses a substantial body of archival material that chronicles the life of this community.<sup>81</sup> Archival sources in Metropolitan AME Church's papers at Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University document the congregations' awareness of its material traditions. An undated list, possibly completed around the 1950s, shows items received as gifts for use in the church.<sup>82</sup> The fifteen items, predominantly decorative objects intended for the sanctuary, aimed to synthesize Union Bethel and Metropolitan's connection, as several objects are documented as having originated from that earlier space. The remainder of this section will outline material narratives that present layers of complementary histories.

The gifts housed in the church range from rare books by African American authors to an undated massive iron anvil. The rare book collection serves as material testament to the tradition of literacy represented by African American spaces like Metropolitan AME Church during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>83</sup> The anvil, on the other hand, symbolically linked the national church to "Mother" Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia the founding church of the denomination. The anvil is mythologized in AME early histories as the object the Rev. Richard Allen used for a pulpit in the retrofitted blacksmith shop sanctuary. Metropolitan also houses a

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<sup>80</sup> Unidentified Author, "List of Gist for Use in the Church," Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 6-69, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. For instance, Metropolitan's "Gifts for use in the Church" list documents the offering of a long conference table with these words: "Long Conference Table in the parlor of the church by Mr. Harry Parker who was employed at the U.S. Capitol Building. They purchased new furniture and gave this table to Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in 1896."

<sup>81</sup> Wilma R. Harvey, "Work Session—List of Documents on Hand," 3 Mar 2009, Collection of Wilma R. Harvey (Private Collection), Washington, D.C. The collection includes administrative material concerning membership, finances, denominational proceeding and structural history. Whereas Bishop Alexander Wayman discusses the practice of bestowing gifts such silver decorative plates to distinguished guests during his time as pastor of Israel Church, there is a more lengthy record of members and friends of the congregation adorning the church with decoration and ritual objects.

<sup>82</sup> Unidentified Author, "List of Gifts for Use in the Church," Metropolitan AME Church Papers, 6-69, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. It would be interesting to know what gifts were given not for general use in the church, such as donations to parsonage spaces.

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 37-38.

rich artistic legacy that traces the congregation's views on the role of race in representation of Christ as the church amassed paintings of white biblical characters. The aesthetic debates represented in these types of visual histories provide a concrete context for the spaces that influenced African American artists interpreting religious subject matter.

The church archive contains a Scurlock Studio photograph that shows Metropolitan AME Church following the completion of John Lankford's 1922 renovations.<sup>84</sup> (Figure 3.24) The photograph reveals two slender neoclassical candelabras, one of which was given to the church by a friend of the congregation and frequent visitor, Frederick Douglass. The donation of the set is documented in the *Christian Recorder* on June 10, 1886 where they were referred to as pulpit light columns valued at \$100.<sup>85</sup> The following week of the initial June announcement, the *Christian Recorder* published a correction stating the women of the Altar and Pulpit Guild furnished a matching "beautiful artistic brass standard."<sup>86</sup> This coverage reinforces Metropolitan's status in the denominational landscape in the weeks following the final dedication.<sup>87</sup>

When considering the material artifacts alongside the written accounts, Frederick Douglass seems to have had a dynamic relationship with Metropolitan AME Church that was

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<sup>84</sup> Sue A. Kohler and Jeffrey R. Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Vol. 2(The Commission of Fine Arts)*, (Washington, DC: Commission of Fine Arts, 1988), 231. During the early 1920s, African American architect John Lankford supervised architectural renovations for Metropolitan as denominational architect. The project included replacing slate roof, repairing roof trussed, installing new chimney stacks. One of the most visible aspects of the renovation was the construction of a permanent three tiered choir stand behind the elevated pulpit. This photograph documents the addition of a three tiered choir loft directly behind the pulpit.

<sup>85</sup> "The Hons. Frederick Douglass and Robert Smalls donated..." *Christian Recorder*, 10 June 1886, as republished by Accessible Archives.

<sup>86</sup> Martha A. Simms and S.E. Tyree, "A Correction," *Christian Recorder*, 10 June 1886, as republished by Accessible Archives. The full correction was published as follows: "The beautiful artistic brass standards of 14 porcelain candies for the pulpit lights of the A.M.E. Metropolitan church were presented, one by the Hon. Frederick Douglass the other by the ladies of the Pulpit and Altar Club of the Church; also the carpet, cushion and furniture for the pulpit were presented by them." The women of Metropolitan AME Church ensured their contribution to this effort was recognized in church histories.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



unwavering in the face of several pastors who varied in their opinion of him. In fact, the Rev. Steward recalls Douglass's role at the dedication festivities, remarking "I should say, that in these exercises during the week-day evenings speeches were made by ... Frederick Douglass and others of sufficient public standing ..." <sup>88</sup> The Rev. Steward, appalled by the financial condition of the congregation after completing such a massive construction project, maintained high expectations of members and associates, concluding:

These visitors and friends contributed in the general collections, of course, and contributed liberally; but they did not accept the debt as their debt. Mr. Douglass was a regular and liberal contributor in many ways--giving his money, his presence, his influence and his public services freely in aid of the church. <sup>89</sup>

In fact, Steward pursued this observation in a letter to Douglass inquiring if there was a correlation between his unwavering contributions and his views on the black church.

Steward describes his intention with this correspondence in his memoir, stating, "I had heard that he was not a believer in Christianity; and it was further said by some that he had little respect for ministers or religion. My letter called forth from his great soul a confession of faith..." <sup>90</sup> Steward does not include the contents of his letter to Douglass, but his description suggests it was a confrontational written communication. Steward's disposition reflects a contentious dynamic between the church members and associates of the church that often were officers and leaders in the Bethel Literary and Historical Society. Audrey Kerr's recent study of colorism within the DC African American community also documents this tension in the case of Metropolitan. Colorism is racial prejudice or interracial discrimination based on phenotypical

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<sup>88</sup> Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 230, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html> > (accessed: January 12, 2015). Other speakers included Honorable John Sherman, Honorable Robert Smalls.

<sup>89</sup> Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 231, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html> > (accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

characteristics like skin complexion and hair texture.<sup>91</sup> Kerr suggests the membership of Bethel Literary Society, of which Douglass was an active member, was mostly comprised of “lettered black Washingtonians” who were not necessarily members of Metropolitan or Union Bethel.<sup>92</sup> The organizational structure of Bethel Literary and Historical Society also seems to have positioned these elected officers against the AME Bishops. Using the consistent commentary on the Bethel Literary and Historical Society in the *Washington Bee* articles as evidence, Kerr asserts, “While the rule of bishop was accepted in the role of spiritual leader, his intellectual prowess could certainly be challenged by outsiders.”<sup>93</sup>

Pastor Theophilus Steward includes an alleged transcription of Douglass’s response in his memoir manuscript entitled, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914*. Douglass’s lengthy reply resisted the demand for a declaration of faith, expressed his support of Metropolitan and put forth a recollection that reflects his appreciation of Metropolitan as an architectural feat. According to the Rev. Steward, Douglass eloquently replied:

I have frequently heard myself called, in anything but an amiable spirit, infidel, atheist, and disorganizer, by ignorant men, inside and outside the pulpit, who really did not know the significance of the epithets they applied to me... I do not wonder, therefore, in view of the frequency of such utterances, you should be surprised to find me a regular reader of your church organ, a supporter of your church over which you preside. My line of conduct in this matter is not determined by my approval of the theological dogmas often promulgated from the pulpit... Now looking at the church, apart from what is purely theological and abstract, I see in it means of promoting honorable character and conduct; and, as I have said, for this reason, I contribute my mite towards its support. I have still another reason for this action, though not one of equal weight with that already given. It is because I would have colored people enjoy advantages for assembling themselves together, for moral and spiritual improvement, equal to those enjoyed by others. A large, commodious and well-appointed church, in pulpit, choir and

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<sup>91</sup> For more information on colorism in the African American community see the following sources: Kathy Russell-Cole, Midge Wilson, and Ronald E. Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>92</sup> Audrey Kerr, “Complexion and Worship,” *The Paper Bag Principle: Class, Colorism, and Rumor and the Case of Black Washington, D.C.* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 104.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

architecture, is attractive to the people who assemble, and commands respect from the outside world. The African Methodist Episcopal Church (the name by the way is altogether too long and stilted for my taste) is such a church, and therefore, I want to see it flourish.<sup>94</sup>

Assuming the pastor's transcription was not altered, this presents a view of Frederick Douglass as proponent of developing African American material traditions. His description of a "large, commodious" church suggests Douglass' familiarity with Victorian architectural rhetoric.<sup>95</sup> Recent scholarship on the philosophical underpinnings of Frederick Douglass's visual culture offers analytical insight into the intentions behind the brass neoclassical candelabra offered by Douglass.<sup>96</sup> Ginger Hill's essay "'Rightly Viewed': Theorization of Self in Frederick Douglass's Lectures on Pictures" explores the ways in which Douglass uses Victorian aesthetic vocabularies in his material performance of racial equality. Hill suggests, "The flight from the chaos and immortality of slavery to self-possession and self-imposed order and ownership is visually legitimated by his possession and maintenance of property."<sup>97</sup> This analysis, along with Douglass own reflections (as rearticulated in Steward's transcription), presents a case of African Americans using material and aesthetic means to make an argument for racial equality and progress.

In fact, photographs of the Victorian interior spaces of Douglass's Cedar Hill home help establish the cultural meaning behind his gifting the neoclassical candelabras to Metropolitan AME Church. A small booklet of photographs of Douglass and his estate, bound by a red ribbon,

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<sup>94</sup> Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 232-235, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html>> (accessed: January 12, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> During the first eight years of the 1870s, Douglass resided at in a Capitol Hill row house at 316 A Street, NE that afforded him and his family an aristocratic environment.

<sup>96</sup> Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith. *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).; John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd Celeste-Marie Bernier, Henry Louis Gates, and Kenneth B. Morris. *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015).

<sup>97</sup> Ginger Hill, "'Rightly viewed': theorizations of self in Frederick Douglass's lecture on pictures," *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 51.

documents his domestic space adorned with the Victorian objects. An image captioned, “Mr. Douglass in his Library,” shows him working at his desk with his back to the camera.<sup>98</sup>(Figure 3.25) Frederick Douglass is flanked by a sculpturally carved side table and an additional chair with cane backing. The side table and chair hold an article Douglass is often photographed with: a straw hat and open book. The majority of the visible space on his desk is occupied with additional objects that evoke his middle-class, Victorian values such as stacks of correspondences, a violin as well as a small marble bust. The focal point of this photograph is the chair that supports Douglass, highlighted by the light that pours through the bay window. Just as Frederick Douglass’s interior spaces commemorated and promoted his ideologies concerning cultural advancement, the candelabra that Frederick Douglass bestowed upon this religious community also represents his ideals. By gifting the brass candelabra, Douglass expressed his material and aesthetic solidarity with this community of African Americans.

The brass candelabras were originally designed to operate with gas. The central post of the candelabras emerges from a column-like base and terminates with a light that forms the apex of the candelabra.(Figure 3.26) Resembling the design of traditional Jewish menorahs, three concentric semi-circles comprise the arms of the structure, with a bulb at each end. The small hanging medallions function to formally frame the central pier. Providing visual variety and texturally engaging the light omitted from the bulbs above, these candelabras, simplistic yet brilliant in their effect, became integral to the decorative program of Metropolitan’s sanctuary.

Even being converted to function with electricity, they remained in this space until the mid-1980s

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<sup>98</sup> A document entitled “The Frederick Douglass Souvenir” is housed in the Archibald Grimke Papers at Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. A small card, bearing Douglass’s signature and the year 1889, was found outside of the artifact in the archives, possibly providing a date of authorship for the booklet. This information was gathered during a site visit to Cedar Hill, the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Feb. 2015. Published architectural plans of the house and the photographic documentation support the accuracy of the museum display of Douglass’s domestic space. This space is defined by the large collection of books and portraits, including his portraits and an image of his second wife, Helen Pitts Douglass. His library was located on the first level of the house, adjacent to the East Parlor where Douglass would receive guests

when they were accidentally damaged.<sup>99</sup> These candelabras are material objects and cultural symbols that tell the story of this space as a community meeting space and national platform where the nation's leaders gathered.<sup>100</sup>

In a call and response fashion that transcends time, Douglass's material gesture was commemorated in the early twentieth century by Jefferson S. Coage. Coage arranged for a brass engraved pew name plate to be affixed on the pew Douglass sat in when he attended.<sup>101</sup> Coage's commemorative gift to this space started a tradition of marking the seats of significant figures affiliated with Metropolitan AME Church. Four men and one woman received this honor: Douglass (c. 1920s), poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (undated), and more recently scholar Charles Harris Wesley (1988) and former pastor Bishop Robert L. Pruitt and influential member and journalist Gwendolyn Ifill.<sup>102</sup> (Figure 3.27) Applying interpretive frameworks Leslie King-Hammond outlines in her essay "Reading the Text," this practice can be understood within the context of African inscription.<sup>103</sup> In a source central to King-Hammond's essay, Mary Nooter Roberts says this of the potential of textual inscription: "...the powers of writing level themselves to sacred contexts of divination, healing, and other forms of spiritual mediation and problem-solving, denotation and states of transformative awareness."<sup>104</sup> The final phrase, "transformative

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<sup>99</sup> Thelma Jacobs, interviewed by the author, digital voice recording, Washington, D.C., 6 April 2014.

<sup>100</sup> The candelabra set remains in the church's possession but have fallen into disrepair after being converted from gas to electrical operation.

<sup>101</sup> Jefferson Coage, "Letter from Jefferson S. Coage to W. E. B. Du Bois, August 19, 1924" W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, MS 312, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, < <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b168-i171> > (accessed: April 3, 2015). A graduate of Wilberforce University and Howard University, Coage would go on to receive a federal appointment to lead government assessments of the Virgin Islands in 1924. The government assessment convoys paved the way for this the U.S.'s governance of this territory after World War I.

<sup>102</sup> Church oral histories suggest that Julia West Hamilton had a name plate on the pew she consistently sat in, but I have not been able to locate that plate.

<sup>103</sup> Leslie King-Hammond, "Reading the Text," *Ashe to Amen: African Americans and Biblical Imagery*, (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2013), 39-84.

<sup>104</sup> Mary Nooter Roberts, "Inscribing Identity: the body," *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic systems in African Art*, Christine Kreamer and Sarah Adams, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian African Art Museum, 2007), 89.

awareness,” epitomizes the aim of these plates: inspiring racial uplift through the commemoration.

This tradition resulted in the grafting of a textual map of influential figures that advanced Metropolitan’s stature by their historic acts, thus materially documenting the “revenant,” defined by Laura Wexler as “the effect of ‘liveness’ produced over time.”<sup>105</sup> Although Wexler is using this term to describe the process of making photographic representation meaningful, I employ the term to discuss a material permanence that is activated or made meaningful with each new or familiar recognition of the listed individual’s history within this sacred space. Each engraved plate receives its perpetual significance through associations brought about by the “revenant” processes that emerge from the historicizing inscriptions of this congregation’s life.

Throughout the twentieth century, Metropolitan AME Church augmented their fine arts heritage in the decorative projects for the recessed pointed arch three-sided niche, behind the pulpit. The earliest photograph dated to 1888 of the interior of the sanctuary reveals that as early as 1888, Gothic tracery was painted onto the recessed arch. (Figure 3.28) The mural programs also included what appears to be a representation of an open book, the Bible in the upper section of the pointed arch niche. The Building Committee ledger documents that an artist from Louis Baessell & Sons frescoed the newly constructed space in 1886.<sup>106</sup> At a price of \$330, the contracted services included the rendering of a monumental column on each wall flanking the pointed arch as well as the aforementioned components of the pointed arch.

In 1918, *The Washington Herald* advertised the upcoming anniversary of Metropolitan AME Church. Under the guidance of “several visiting Bishops,” the services would celebrate

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<sup>105</sup> Laura Wexler, “‘A more perfect likeness’: Frederick Douglass and the image of the nation,” *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 33.

<sup>106</sup> Building Committee Ledger, “Washington DC, August 1881,” 15, Metropolitan AME Church papers, 4-51, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Baessell and Son was a company who advertised their “fresco” service in District of Columbia during the 1880 through the early twentieth century. The church ledger also lists the service as “frescoing.”

what was described as a “complete renovation of the church.”<sup>107</sup> A photograph of the sanctuary taken one year after this anniversary shows the congregation had organ pipes installed over the width of the pointed arch, concealing the lower portion of the early fresco. (Figure 3.29) Local news coverage of the church reveals a new mural was executed in the arch and the removal of the organ pipes.<sup>108</sup> Church member and former Art Students League trained landscape artist, Furman A. Johnson (1901-1977), may have painted this mural. His obituary states that he painted a mural and other artworks for the congregation.<sup>109</sup> The artist segments the compositional space by drafting an additional illusionary arch supported by receding classical columns. Two Doric columns support the illusionary arch, echoing the two columns at the exterior central entry bay. Although the black and white photograph and oral history accounts do not specify the palette, variations in ornate tracery distinguish each aspect of the painted surface. The mural maintains flatness in its approach to space as evidenced by the diagonal crowned cross, floating in the upper recesses of the arch.

In his art and writing, Johnson exemplifies the complexity behind African Americans and Anglo-Christian iconography. Furman A. Johnson documents, through image and text, the material importance of Metropolitan AME Church in his faithful membership and material advocacy. Born in Washington D.C., Johnson received his art training from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Art Students League.<sup>110</sup> For thirty years, Johnson worked in the

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<sup>107</sup> “Metropolitan A.M.E. Anniversary,” *The Washington Herald*, 31 Mar 1918, Library of Congress. This renovation was not as complete as the writer suggests as the church invested in a new slate rood in 1920, according to Building Permit No. 882. Commission on Fine Art Citation

<sup>108</sup> Unidentified Newspaper article featuring the photograph of Metropolitan AME Church Sanctuary, Metropolitan Church file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington DC. The organ pipes were moved to the walls that flank the pulpit where they remain.

<sup>109</sup> “Furman A. Johnson, Landscape Painter,” *The Washington Post*, 2 Feb 1977, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: May 25, 2015).

<sup>110</sup> “Furman A. Johnson, Landscape Painter,” *The Washington Post*, 2 Feb 1977, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: May 25, 2015).

Graphic Arts division of the Defense Department.<sup>111</sup> Painting primarily in watercolor and oils, the artist exhibited in galleries from DC to Philadelphia.<sup>112</sup> In addition to showing paintings at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Johnson's miniatures were exhibited at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.<sup>113</sup> Furman's art legacy is represented in the church archive with a painting of the Old Testament prophet Samuel. (Figure 3.30) The undated, signed painting entitled *Samuel Praying* appears to be the artist's rendering of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *The Infant Samuel Praying* (1776), currently housed at the Tate Gallery, London.<sup>114</sup> Although the date of the painting's execution and donation to Metropolitan AME Church is not documented, the painting provided a visual tool for Biblical instruction. In fact, Furman A. Johnson's wife, Josie M.L. Johnson, whose membership preceded her husband's affiliation, served as a Sunday School teacher and director of the Dramatics Guild.<sup>115</sup> Through the labor of artists-congregants, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church fostered a fine art tradition that reflects aspects of Classical Black Nationalism; the employment of European cultural means reinterpreted or recontextualized to articulate African American identity and religious beliefs.

During 1949 and the early months of 1950, under the leadership of Pastor G. Dewey Robinson, Metropolitan underwent yet another renovation project which resulted in the installation of a large scale mural of a full-length naturalistic representation of a Anglo-American Christ, flanked by two angels. (Figure 3.31) Theresa Dickerson Cederholm's 1973 book, *Afro-American Artists: a Bio-Bibliographical Directory*, credits Wallace X. Conway Sr. (1920-2013),

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<sup>111</sup> "Furman A. Johnson, Landscape Painter," *The Washington Post*, 2 Feb 1977, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: May 25, 2015).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Derek Hudson, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: a Personal Study*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958), 160. This painting was reproduced in American publications through the twentieth century such as the Century Company's 1901 *Bible for Children*. By 1958, Derek Hudson's biographical study, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: a Personal Study*, had been published and discussed the composition as a symbol and "gesture toward piety."

<sup>115</sup> "Josie M.L. Johnson," *The Washington Post*, 12 Nov 1981, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: May 25, 2015).



a native Washingtonian artist, curator and Smithsonian graphic designer with executing a mural entitled *Ascension of Christ* housed in Metropolitan AME Church.<sup>116</sup> Located beneath the reproduction of the mural in the artist's papers, Conway's annotation reads: "Triptych in background designed and rendered by incumbent. Christ figure 13' tall. Also responsible for restoration of all stencils."<sup>117</sup>

Wallace X. Conway, Sr. developed a range of design skills to qualify him for his role in designing Metropolitan's decorative program.<sup>118</sup> In the brochure for his 1990 exhibition "The Drawing and Painting of Wallace X. Conway," the artist aptly characterized his interest as being "divided between fine and commercial art."<sup>119</sup> During the 1920s, Conway's father, Ewell L. Conway, supervised the Negro art advertising department for the Lightman Theater Chain, a white-owned theater chain for African Americans that profited from Jim Crow segregation.<sup>120</sup> The franchise included Washington, D.C.'s Howard Theater, in the U Street district. Wallace X. Conway would take on his father's position in supervising art advertising until the 1950s, when he would transfer those skills to creating his own graphic art company, Co-Arts. More than likely,

<sup>116</sup>Theresa D. Cederholm, *Afro-American Artists; a Bio-Bibliographical Directory* (Boston: Trustees of the Boston Public Library, 1973), 60.; Janis Johnson, "Metropolitan AME Plans Restoration: Metropolitan AME Church Seeks Funds for Restoration," *Washington Post*, 4 June 1975, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. I found Janis Johnson's *Washington Post* article entitled "Metropolitan AME Plans Restoration," published June 4, 1975, with handwritten annotations, documenting the artist's contribution. The mural artist's association with the congregation had been lost.

<sup>117</sup> Wallace X. Conway, "Annotations: Janis Johnson's *Washington Post* article "Metropolitan AME Plans Restoration," published June 4, 1975, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

<sup>118</sup> Unidentified photographer, *Photograph of Wallace Conway*, unidentified newspaper, n.d., Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. This photograph shows a young Conway, painting a backdrop for a Democratic Party banquet. It indicates that Wallace Conway has a visible presence in the region.

<sup>119</sup> Black Dimensions in Art, Inc, "The Artist" *The Drawing and Painting of Wallace Conway*, (Schenectady, NY, 1990,13, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

<sup>120</sup> "E.L. Conway, Ex-teacher and Designer," *The Washington Post*, 23 Jul 1972, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: May 19, 2015); Wallace X. Conway, "The First Thirsty-Five Years of Black Filmmakers: The Independents versus Hollywood, 1915-1950," (brochure), n.d., 6, New Jersey State Museum, , Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

Metropolitan contracted for the services of Conway through Co-Arts, as there is no indication of his membership at the church. Conway continued to work in this capacity as he earned his Bachelor of Science in Education from Miner Teacher's College (which would later become the University of the District of Columbia).<sup>121</sup> He eventually earned his Master of Fine Arts from New York University, in the late 1980s.<sup>122</sup> Although his art career did not gain momentum until the 1960s, Conway broke down professional barriers in the museum world by serving as one of the earliest African American exhibition specialists and graphic designers for the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Conway went on to serve as the first African American Curator of Visual Presentation for the New Jersey State Museum.<sup>123</sup> He established a presence as a practicing Black Art Movement artist in the nationwide network of Black artists participating in the 1977 FESTAC, and in organizations such Black Artists of America.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> "Design Survey: Wallace Xavier Conway," 2, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. The artist pursued extensive academic training from educational outlets including, Catholic University, where he earned a degree in arts education, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

<sup>122</sup> "Design Survey: Wallace Xavier Conway," 2, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. Conway also explored art education in Europe studying in Venice, Italy with a New York University program and the American Academy at the University of Paris.

<sup>123</sup> "Addendum; Additional Background Synoptic, Design Survey: Wallace Xavier Conway," 1, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

<sup>124</sup> "Curriculum Vitae, c. 1970," Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. Festac was the acronym given to the World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture. This diasporic cultural convention was initiated under the auspices of the First World Festival of Negro Arts which convened in Dakar, Senegal in April 1966. Léopold Senghor claimed the cultural activities were "in defense of and an illustration of Negritude." For more information on the sharp criticism of the American Committee's participation see Morgan Kulla, "The Politics of Culture: the Case of Festac," *UFAHAMU: A Journal of African Studies*, Vol.7(1976) and Hoyt W. Fuller, "Assessment & Questions: Festival Postscript," *Negro Digest*, (June 1966), as republished by Googlebooks; Tobias Wofford, *Africa As Muse : The Visualization of Diaspora in African American Art, 1950-1980*, diss.—University of California, Los Angeles, 2011. From January 15 to February 12, the Second World Festival of Black and African Art and Culture was hosted in Lagos, Nigeria. The American delegation was led by artist and art historian, Jeff Donaldson. In addition to exhibiting his art, Wallace Conway was also a part of the New Jersey delegation. For more information on Festac '77 see the following publications: Alex Poinsett, "Festac '77," *Ebony*, (May 1977): 33-46, as republished on Googlebooks; Kirstin L. Ellsworth, "Africobra and the Negotiation of Visual Afrocentrism," *Civilisations*, Vol .58 (2009): 21-38.

From 1950 to 1965, Conway was the owner and director of Co-Art Studios. He described Co-Arts as “a Washington DC based visual arts establishment specializing in interior, industrial and graphic design as well as exhibit and display design.”<sup>125</sup> In the years prior to the Metropolitan commission, Conway also executed a full-size fresco replication of Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*.<sup>126</sup> Conway details his participation with Metropolitan’s renovation, under the title of Project Manager and Implementer for all interior renovation.<sup>127</sup> The artist also designed the visual material to commemorate the renovation. According to the artist, he designed record jackets, magazine covers, brochures and visual decoration.<sup>128</sup> Metropolitan presented an opportunity for Wallace Conway to use all aspects of his aesthetic training to craft a new visual program for the church.

Conway’s curriculum vitae listed the triptych, *Ascension of Christ*, featuring a thirteen-foot-tall Christ, as the first major art commission in his oeuvre.<sup>129</sup> Working primarily in oils, the artist built a reputation for portraiture. In fact, his curriculum vitae advertised his services as a portrait artist.<sup>130</sup> In the *Ascension*, Christ is depicted surrounded by clouds and rays of sunlight. (Figure 3.32) The messianic figure is crowned by a row of flying *putti*. His impeccable draftsmanship skills enabled him to render an image of Christ that seems to be inspired by contemporary representations. Conway’s Christ appears to be a composition that uses popular

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<sup>125</sup> “Addendum; Additional Background Synoptic, Design Survey: Wallace Xavier Conway,” 1, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

<sup>126</sup> A photograph of Conway painting his life-size *Last Supper* replica included in slide collection, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York. Although the records do not indicate where this replica was housed, his artist file contains slides of him painting the mural. Conway described the cornice stenciling design around the parameter of the sanctuary as requiring “graining, staining and marbling.”

<sup>127</sup> “Addendum; Additional Background Synoptic, Design Survey: Wallace Xavier Conway,” 1, Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> The mural accommodates the window in the lower right corner of the arch.

<sup>130</sup> “Curriculum Vitae, c. 1970,” Artist File: Wallace X. Conway, the Archive of Afro American Design, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York.

images of Christ such as Warner Sallman's *Head of Christ* (1941). The artist's interest in light and value is evident in his detailed naturalistic treatment of the figures' clothing and the clouds. The triptych presents Christ as the central figure in the pyramidal compositional form. The imposing scale of Christ is emphasized by the thin palm trees that rise to his knee. Considering the trees seem to subvert the voluminous space, the palm trees may be interpreted as a symbol of Christ's upward movement toward paradise.

*Ascension of Christ* reflects two traditions—the endurance of American mural traditions and the legacy of African American congregations adopting white Christian iconography. Conway's mural symbolizes the popularity of mural painting in religious spaces across the nation's capital, Maryland and Virginia. From 1955-1960, a myriad of congregations across the city engaged in mural projects. For example, in 1958, following the opening of Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux's modern Temple for Freedom under God, President Eisenhower donated \$100 toward the realization of the 14 x 38 feet *Crucified Christ*, an oil on linen mural to be executed by New York painter, Lumen Marton Winter.<sup>131</sup> St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church, which was still located on L Street, NW, boasted a mural program with three large scale saints.<sup>132</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, the topic of the race of Christ has always been a contentious debate. In 1895, the AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner was an early advocate for recognizing Christ as a Negro.<sup>133</sup> During the New Negro Renaissance of the early twentieth century, Marcus Garvey envisioned and called for the painting of images of a Black Madonna and

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<sup>131</sup> Kenneth Dole, "Ike, Mamie Donate to Micheaux Mural," *The Washington Post*, 4 Apr 1958, B4, *The Washington Post 1877-ProQuest Historical Newspapers* (accessed: March 29, 2014).

<sup>132</sup> Morris J. MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

<sup>133</sup> Andre E. Johnson, "'God is a Negro: the (Rhetorical) Black Theology of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner," *Black Theology*, Vol. 13, (April 2015):29-40. In 1895, the Rev. Turner addressed Friendship Baptist Church (Atlanta, GA), arguing that Christ was a Negro and African Americans should acknowledge and worship Christ as a Negro.

a Black Christ.<sup>134</sup> One year after the publication of John Henry Clarke's 1944 short-story entitled, "The Boy who Painted Christ Black," African American film director Spencer Williams released a widely distributed film in 1945, *The Blood of Christ*, that features repetitive scenes of a novice-faith Christian demonstrating the required visual adoration the image of Christ. (Figure 3.33) The hypervisibility of images of an Anglo-American Christ accounts for this mode of representation as being normalized in American visual culture.

Some of the most prominent African American artists of the 1940s and 1950s explore Christ as subject matter in their art. Across painting as well as printmaking, Boston artist Allan Rohan Crite (1916-2007) was a leader in creating Christian artwork and often referred to himself as liturgical artist.<sup>135</sup> Although he explores deep saturated representations of Christ in his Negro spiritual illustrated books, Crite also painted Caucasian images of Christ as demonstrated in his 1947 composition, *Stations of the Cross*. (Figure 3.34) Christ wearily steps forward towards Mary. The pair is represented with white skin and brown hair. Both figures are united in their gaze, through the color white and the heavy gold haloes. The haloes reflect the influence of Episcopalian liturgical art. Julie Ann Caro's dissertation on Crite explores how his work reflects elements of black middle class identities and values. The Conway mural can be understood as one of the latter demonstrations of nineteenth century classical black nationalism where "...cultural ideals...usually resembled those of upper class Europeans and white Americans, rather than those

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<sup>134</sup>Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, "God is a Negro," *The Voice of Missions*, 1 Feb 1898. In the nineteenth century, the suggestion that Christ was of African descent was espoused by the earliest proponents of Classical Black Nationalism such as Bishop Henry McNeal Turner; Rev. Albert Cleage, "The Resurrection of the Nation," *The Black Messiah* (New York: Heed and Ward, 1968), 86; for more information on the history of this Black Christ iconography in Black radical thought see Gayraud Wilmore, "The Black Messiah: Revising the Color Symbolism of Western Christology," *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lense* (New York: New York University Press, 2004; originally published in *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, Vol. 2, no. 1, Fall 1974: 8-18.

<sup>135</sup>National Museum for African American History and Culture, "Allan Rohan Crite, *Stations of the Cross*," wall label, 2016.

of the native African or African American masses.”<sup>136</sup> Considering *Ascension of Christ* through this framework allows one to question the ways in which African American religious communities may have reinterpreted white Christ iconography to represent cultural and racial advancement.

Historians have acknowledged the instrumental role Christianity played in the Western imperial project, specifically in formerly colonized spaces. A stereograph dated 1860 illustrates omnipresence of the representation of a white Crucified Christ in sacred spaces on plantations.<sup>137</sup> The photograph entitled, *Slave Church at Rockville, South Carolina*, places the illustration of the crucifixion in focus. The underlying intention behind this iconography was to offer enslaved persons an image to parallel the suffering they endured.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, the image functioned to reify the relationship between whiteness and divinity, thus reinforcing the standing racial hierarchies. It is instructive to consider that *Ascension of Christ* must be understood as a cultural expression informed by the underpinnings of Classical Black Nationalism, an ideology at the core of Metropolitan’s early intellectual and cultural life.

In recent interviews with church member Thelma Jacobs and former Pastor Bishop William P. DeVeaux, they both remarked that the congregation was quite ambivalent toward the *Ascension of Christ* mural, which stayed in place for about twenty-eight years. But the material record indicates at the time of its completion, Conway’s Christ mural was a source of pride. In the

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<sup>136</sup> Wilson J. Moses “Introduction,” *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolutionary to Marcus Garvey*, (New York: University of New York Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>137</sup> Osborn and Durbec, *Slave Church at Rockville, South Carolina*, 1860, stereograph, South Carolina Historical Society, Columbia, SC; as reproduced in Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013). This photograph is evidence of the central role illustrations of a Euro-Anglo Christ had on American plantations.

<sup>138</sup> Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

early 1960s, the congregation had postcards and Christmas cards produced featuring a photographic reproduction of the pulpit and *Ascension of Christ*.<sup>139</sup> These allowed members to engage in the popular practice of Christian consumption, popularized by the circulation of evangelical art.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the church increased its visibility, reintroducing itself as “The Cathedral of African Methodism in the heart of the nation’s capital,” on the postcards and Christmas cards during a critical period for the congregation. Artist Furman A. Johnson penned a lengthy open letter to the African American periodical, *The Afro-American*, entitled, “Church on Trial,” that publically accused the church leadership of fueling lucrative offers to have the church leveled for a parking lot.<sup>141</sup> Johnson put forth a strong argument that advocated for the material permanence of Metropolitan AME Church and its legacy.<sup>142</sup> Johnson echoes the narrative

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<sup>139</sup> Postcard with Sanctuary, Private Collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD. The Christmas card seen in was printed in 1966 using a New Jersey printing company, suggesting Conway, who moved to Trenton, New Jersey in 1965, may have orchestrated this project.

<sup>140</sup> This analysis is informed by Jerry Z. Park and Joseph Baker, “What Would Jesus Buy: American Consumption of Religious and Spiritual Material Goods,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46 (Dec, 2007), 501-510.

<sup>141</sup> Furman A. Johnson, “Our Readers Say: Church on Trial,” *The Afro-American*, n.d., Metropolitan AME Church vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, DC. During the 1960 and 1970s, Metropolitan AME Church was consistently pressured by developers and the District of Columbia government to sell the lot the church on in addition to an adjoining lot the church used as a parking lot. This adjacent parking lot was eventually sold in the 1970s to a developer who would erect a tall office building alongside the sacred structure. Johnson passionately offered these words for their circumstance: “The leadership of Metropolitan AME is dragging the old historic structure out one more time and putting it on trial, and with the same charges: --obstructing progress downtown. We are objecting to the plan that it would be moved to some unknown location for the purpose of serving THAT community with education facilities, recreation, library and everything but what it is intended to serve... There is no telling how much the rich dividends will pay after the sale is complete, even at the cost of the Negro losing his last foothold as a property owner in downtown Washington, D.C. It is no secret the white race wants the American Negro out of the way Why help him?... Since the very start of this movement, there have always been those trumped up objectives such as: no parking, more building space for serving the community, all kinds of facilities for the youth. Never at any time mentioning where Christ comes in... The colored race definitely needs a downtown church. With all movement today for integration, this is really integration. We are still in our own building, yet integrated among the white race.”

<sup>142</sup> Considering several additional news articles document American Chemical Society’s incessant offers, Johnson’s letter was probably penned in the 1960s. Newspaper articles that identify Metropolitan AME Church pastor, the Rev. G. Dewey Robinson, as being an advocate for the sale of the property include the following: “Church to Debate Move,” *Washington Daily News*, 26 June 1962, Metropolitan vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library; “Old Church Due to Vote on Sale Plan,” *Washington Post*, 30 Jun 1962, Metropolitan vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library; Carl Sims, “Chemical Society Seeks Purchase of Negro Church,” *Washington Post*, 5 July 1967,

promoted by late nineteenth century AME Bishops who convinced their denomination that Metropolitan AME Church would stand as a material testament to racial advancement. Furman's advocacy contributed to the effort to save the structure and a monumental mural executed by a local African-American artist, Wallace X. Conway.

By the 1970s, with the increasing influence of Black Liberation Theology and aesthetic ideals of the Black Arts Movement, segments of the congregation actively challenged the presence of *Ascension of Christ*. Howard University alumnus and artist, George Shomari, recalls his attempts in the 1970s to convince Pastor Robert Pruitt, Pastor William P. De Veaux's predecessor, to remove the white Christ on the account of the insidious result of elevating whiteness.<sup>143</sup> De Veaux, a graduate of Howard Divinity School and aware of the influence of the "Black is Beautiful" campaign and the Black Liberation Theology, decided to replace the mural with an installation of three crosses.( Figure 3.35) A large pine cross is suspended from the pointed arch. Two white crosses are affixed to the back wall. In a 2014 interview, Bishop William P. De Veaux credited Paul Tillich's rumination on universal Christian symbols with informing the cross installation.<sup>144</sup> Instead of the crucifix bearing Christ's body as evidence of sacrifice, the abstract pine crosses hang with imposing scale. In this instance, the late twentieth century aesthetic shift continues the strong tradition of furthering a rich material history that often reflects contemporary stylistic preferences.

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Metropolitan vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library; Stephen Johnston, "Members Split Over Church Move," *The Washington Afro-American*, 15 Jul 1967, Metropolitan vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library; Joanne Davis, "Construction Damaging Church: Negotiations continue between Metropolitan and Chemical Group," *The Washington Afro-American*, 27 Sept 1986, Metropolitan vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

<sup>143</sup> George Shomari interviewed by the author, Howard University, written transcription, February 9, 2015.

<sup>144</sup> Bishop William P. DeVeaux interviewed by the author, via phone, digital recording, April 24, 2014. For more information on Paul Tillich's aesthetic philosophies see the following texts: Paul Tillich, Jane Dillenberger, and John Dillenberger, *On Art and Architecture*, (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Michael F. Palmer, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Art* (Berline: de Gruyter, 1983); John Dillenberger, *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities: the Visual Arts and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1986).



From its earliest moments, Metropolitan AME Church became a photographic symbol that bears a rich visual history of an African American religious community, both local and national. This history reflects the issues of race and representation that African American congregations consistently confronted. The material and visual history of Metropolitan AME Church's sanctuary document this religious community's evolving identity. In addition to the spiritual objects that situate this congregation within broader Methodist and Protestant practice, this sanctuary maps the voices of figures affiliated with that space.

### **Tracing the Life of the Space as Visual Record**

Just as Richard Allen's portrait countered the stereotypical image of black Methodists in early nineteenth century Philadelphia, Metropolitan is responsible for creating and circulating images as evidence of a legacy concerned with racial advancement. Visually documenting the presence of such intellectual activity in African American churches was necessary to contest widely circulated images such as The 1885 *Darktown series* print by Thomas Worth, "A Literary Debate in the Darktown Club: The Question Settled." (Figure 3.36) Bryan F. Le Beau's article, "African Americans in Currier and Ives: the Darktown Series," characterized the series as illustrating "blacks attempts at engaging in white activities ending in chaos."<sup>145</sup> Resisting traditional art historical interpretation, Le Beau's formal analysis of the Thomas Worth rendering of the Darktown Literary debate offers an inventory of the scene. Both object and text predict the violent outcome in this illustration. Alongside Presidential portraits, the unidentifiable hall—neither domestic gathering nor religious space—promotes the orators in posters where individuals are presented as rambunctious lions with human heads, furthering the caricaturing of the black body. In the initial scene the beverages available to the debate participants included a handleless

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<sup>145</sup> Bryan F. Le Beau, "African Americans in Currier and Ives's America: The Darktown Series," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures*, 23 (2000.): 79.

pitcher of milk and lime juice alongside a dark bottle labeled “straight.” Instead of an intellectual dual, the figures settled the question through physical means.

The debate audience is absent replaced with a police officer. “The Question Settled” and the *Darktown Series* at large aim to picture the African American as oppositional to Anglo-American ideals. This perpetuated a notion of all classes of African Americans as innately lacking the capability to be productive American citizens. Furthermore, this type of imagery was intended to delegitimize middle class African American culture that was concerned with elevating the race through a variety of means such as cultural refinement. In the face of the Black Nadir, the period from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 through the early twentieth century and the impositions of Black Codes, laws enacted by southern states in 1865 and 1866 to limit rights and freedom to African Americans, AME Bishops ensured there was space for the necessary functions of the black church, ranging from ritual practice to educational resources.<sup>146</sup> Literary scholars have documented the networks of literary societies in cities like Philadelphia and Boston that comprised an educational landscape that functioned in opposition dominant efforts to suppress African American intellectual development.<sup>147</sup>

Metropolitan offered the African American community space for intellectual, political and spiritual engagement. At the time of its reintroduction in 1881, the Bethel Literary and Historical Society filled a void in the African American community. The Bethel Literary and Historical Society was an independent organization that met in Union Bethel’s Bethel Hall and

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<sup>146</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois and David L. Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America*, (New York: Free Press, 1998), 167-180, 329, 385. In one of the earliest analytical studies of the period of Reconstruction, Du Bois examines examples of Black Codes, state by state. Du Bois asserts that this type of legislation, which targeted the mobility, freedom and labor rights of African Americans in the South. Du Bois argues that the Black Codes “established a new status of slavery with a modified slave trade.”; Rayford Whittingham Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954). Logan coins the term Black Nadir.

<sup>147</sup> Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

later in Metropolitan AME Church. The group was comprised of both non-members and members of the host church. Aside from the cultural societies that met in Victorian parlors, Bethel Literary responded to “a growing demand for some institution at the National Capitol in which the varied talents of young men and women could get the greatest opportunity for growth and development.”<sup>148</sup> As one of the most influential African American organizations in the nation’s capital at the turn of the century, Bethel Literary and Historical Society facilitated and advanced the discourse surrounding African American social issues. A *People’s Advocate* newspaper report from December 15, 1883 (during the period Metropolitan AME Church was under construction) described the organization with these words: “Bethel Literary, while it consists of clerks, school teachers, professional men and others occupying the higher grades of labor, offers inducement and entry to all persons who desire to avail themselves of the benefits it is able to offer. It is democratic in its character and reaches out its arms to encompass all the people...[the] secret of its usefulness [was] its liberality.”<sup>149</sup> The local DC press covered the organization’s affairs, thus carrying the debates that occurred, first in Bethel Hall and by 1885 Metropolitan AME Church, across the nation.<sup>150</sup>

Building on a rich heritage which boasts the participation of figures such as Frederick Douglass, his son, Lewis Douglass and Kelly Miller, the Bethel Literary Society was one of the most consistent and influential gatherings, that often set the tenor for intellectual debate in the

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<sup>148</sup> Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 367, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>149</sup> McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 156.

<sup>150</sup> Bethel Hall was a temporary structure housed on the lot adjacent to Charles Sumner Public school at M and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW that houses the congregation while Metropolitan AME Church was under construction.

African American community.<sup>151</sup> Wilberforce University Library holds an undated photograph of Frederick Douglass, Bishop Daniel Payne and Bishop Benjamin Arnett.<sup>152</sup> (Figure 3.37) The group portrait shows Arnett and Douglass, seated with a frail Payne standing behind the pair. The poor quality of the photograph makes it difficult to determine the setting of the photograph, but this image represents the enduring relationship Douglass maintained with the leading figures in the denomination, especially with his close friend Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. All three men maintained a relationship with the Metropolitan AME Church during the late nineteenth century. All three men played a role in the erection or furnishing of Metropolitan AME.

Metropolitan AME Church's photographic record defines this site as a cultural capital dedicated to spiritual and cultural advancement. Constance Green discusses the Bethel Literary and Historical Society's importance in her book, *The Secret City: A History of Race in the Nation's Capital*. She notes, "Indeed the three factors which, despite manifold discouragements, made Washington a center of Negro civilization were government employment, Howard University and the Bethel Literary and Historical Association."<sup>153</sup> Jacqueline Moore emphasized the importance of Bethel Literary Society with these words:

Three factors accounted for the success of the Bethel Literary. First, it provided an outlet for frustrations through discussions of racial topics. Second, it operated at an intellectual level that appealed to the educated and largely professional black elite that was assuming a leadership role in the community. Third, and possibly most important, the Bethel Literary boosted racial pride in a non-

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<sup>151</sup>Ida Jones, *The Heart of the Race Problem: The Life of Kelly Miller* (Littleton: Tapestry Press, 2011); Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*,

<sup>152</sup> Wilberforce University Library posted an internet link to the digital reproduction of this image.

<sup>153</sup> Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 151. Kelly Miller (1863-1939) was one of the intellectual figures that defined African American thought during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. He graduate from Howard University and went on to be the first African American graduate student to be admitted to John Hopkins University. Miller would go on to earn a law degree from Howard University. He would remain at Howard as a professor and would ascend to be Dean of the College of Arts and Science. From his time as a Howard University student to his time as administration, Miller was an active participant in the Bethel Literary Society and is noted as the "most overtly critical voice on the record." In 1896, Miller delivered a lecture to Bethel Literary Society on the subject of industrial education.

confrontational manner. Discussing historical issues was an acceptable elite behavior for both blacks and whites, and the lyceum format was quite fashionable in the late nineteenth century. Washington's elite blacks were able to maintain their "genteel performance" while strengthening pride in their heritage.<sup>154</sup>

Moore's analysis of Bethel Literary Society provides a context for understanding the ways in which these Victorian-era practices served as a vehicle to express African American identity. This body provided a space for constructive critical dialog that barred no particular perspective because of past presenters. *The Christian Recorder* and the *Washington Bee* report that Booker T. Washington spoke at Metropolitan in the early months of 1897.<sup>155</sup> Remaining relevant through the first quarter of the twentieth century, Bethel Literary and Historical Society also had a place in the Washington-Du Bois debate when William H. Ferris delivered an impassioned critique of Booker T. Washington's accommodationist strategies in January 1903.<sup>156</sup>

Photographs associated with Metropolitan Church further this tradition of cultivating intellectual and civic sensibilities. In the Rev. Richard R. Wright's *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, photographic portraits of Bethel Literary leadership initiate the sequence of photographs featuring Metropolitan AME Church. The placement of Bethel Literary at the beginning of Metropolitan's entry indicates this organization as a source of cultural and intellectual pride that was integral to a characterization of Metropolitan. The first image that represents Bethel Literary is the tightly cropped bust length portrait of Miss Marie

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<sup>154</sup> Moore, 67.

<sup>155</sup> *A Literary Digest* Correspondent, "Afro-American Apologist (originally published in *A Literary Digest*)" *Christian Recorder*, 4 Feb 1897, American Newspaper Collection, Accessible Archives Database (accessed: January 16, 2015).

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 68; Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 368, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015). From its earliest moments, the association was administratively structured similarly to the Israel Lyceum and other cultural societies of that time, consisting of Executive Board and traditional officers. At the time of Wright's 1916 centennial publication, among the list of male leadership, Bethel Literary and Historical Association had been led by two women: Mary Church Terrell and Miss Marie A.D. Madre.

A.D. Madre, who was then serving her fifth term as president.<sup>157</sup> (Figure 3.38) The text describes her as a “remarkable woman” committed to the ideals of the organization.<sup>158</sup> The portrait, captured by an unidentified photographer, presents the sitter adorned with subtle middle-class Victorians symbols seen in the finely styled hair and the dark beaded necklace. Debunking the claim that the association practiced colorism, Madre appears to have deep brown skin that the photographer bathes in artificial studio lighting.<sup>159</sup> Above all, Miss Marie Madre confidently gazes out at the camera, communicating her enduring authoritative role as organizational president. The accompanying description presents all the requirements for her place in Washington, D.C.’s black elite including completion of high school and normal school and earning a LL.B and LL.M from Howard University’s Law Department.<sup>160</sup> As an educator in the District of Columbia school system, she was heavily active across several settings as seen in participation in organizing the AME, Baltimore Conference’s branch of the Mite Missionary Society and her service as president of the District Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs.<sup>161</sup> Madre engaged in activities that advanced the goal of racial lift, emphasizing specific Victorian middle class values as a means to convey the humanity and ability of African Americans.

Recent scholarship on Frederick Douglass’s speeches on photography offer insight into how the AME religious community used photography to define African American identity. Laura

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<sup>157</sup> Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 367, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015)

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 367, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015)

This was a common practice that Addison Scurlock interrogated and refined throughout his career. Jeffrey Fearing synthesized this practice in what he termed “The Scurlock Technique,” in his 2005 dissertation. Fearing suggests Addison Scurlock’s use of specific film and lighting equipment, posing and retouching constituted his signature technique and style.

<sup>160</sup> Wright, 368.

<sup>161</sup> Wright, 368-369.

Wexler argues that Frederick Douglass believed photography had the ability to counter “the problem of ‘moral stagnation.’”<sup>162</sup> Ginger Hill puts forth a compelling analysis of Douglass’s views on photography in her essay, “‘Rightly Viewed’: Theorization of Self in Frederick Douglass’s Lectures on Pictures.” Hill states,

Strategically assembled portraiture confirmed this free status, accumulating the trappings—the properties—of the citizen-subject: self-control, bourgeois fashion, genteel sensibilities. Adhering to middle-class portrait conventions, there were visual appeals for recognition from the viewer. What can be inferred from visual evidence is that Douglass or the operators preferred the half-length or isolated bust format, furthering connotation of autonomy... The circulation of these pictures helped create and guarantee his citizen status, visually proclaiming Douglass’s “natural right” to own property and thus be seen as equal, which is to say autonomous and free... the photographs assert self-possession and citizen propriety at the very locale that it is allegedly absent—upon a black body.<sup>163</sup>

While Hill is discussing the significance of Douglass’s likeness circulating in the face of slavery, AME photographic culture functions in a similar fashion. For example, Metropolitan’s Episcopal portraiture collection operates as a testament to the enduring spiritual and social leadership this religious body has engaged in since Bishop Richard Allen.<sup>164</sup> Through text, numbers and images, the denomination promoted AME iconography as a testament to the advancement of the African

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<sup>162</sup> Laura Wexler, “‘A More Perfect Likeness’”: Frederick Douglass and the Image of the Nation” *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 18.

<sup>163</sup> Ginger Hill, “‘Rightly viewed’: theorizations of self in Frederick Douglass’s lecture on pictures,” *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 48-49.

<sup>164</sup> “Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in order of election,” Simms Family papers, 2-54, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, DC. The denomination used the likeness of the AME Bishops in the early twentieth century in the financial campaigns, such as the 1916 lithograph entitled, “Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in order of election.” Textual information including the title and denominational statistics framed this object, circulated to members courtesy of the denominational Financial Department. Continuing the AME formal tradition of making the founder, Bishop Allen the nuclear person in the composition, the designer placed architectural images of two buildings, both homes of “Mother” Bethel, on each side of Allen. The remaining Episcopal figures elected up through 1916 are placed in sequential order, from left to right. The majority of the portraits are photographic reproductions with the exception of the earlier Bishops such as Bishops Morris Brown and James Shorter who are rendered by illustration.

American community as indicated in the explosion of membership to over half of a million after a century of existence.

The Rev. Richard Wright's encyclopedic entry on Metropolitan features AME branches of administration in the congregation through group portraits of church trustees, stewardess and class leaders serving in 1916. Each portrait features the same composition of two rows of people, staggered, producing individual half-length portraits. The church trustees are located indoors, while the other group portraits are taken on the steps of Metropolitan (Figure 3.39 & Figure 3.40), as evidenced by the presence of the Metropolitan's wooden doors, and granite columns in the background. The subtle differences in the trustee photograph included John A. Simms' central position in an ornately carved chair, further emphasized by the placement of a hand on the chair to the left of Simm's head.<sup>165</sup> This slight alteration to the standard group portrait distinguished these men, who as trustee held responsibility for the physical maintenance of the structure. Across all of these group portraits, the diversity of the congregation is emphasized, debunking claims of colorism, during the early twentieth century.

In a manner comparative to James Van Der Zee's documentation of Harlem's religious life, Addison Scurlock and his sons documented African American religious life in ecclesiastical interiors across the District of Columbia.<sup>166</sup> Scurlock Studio visually recorded the AME

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<sup>165</sup> My identification of Simms is based on checking the Odd Fellows BME Program image against portrait entitled, "J. A. SIMMS Efficient Secretary of Metropolitan Church," in Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry from 1864 to 1914* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 228-9, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/steward/steward.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015).

<sup>166</sup>In 1950, on behalf of Scurlock Studios, Robert and George Scurlock, photographed Metropolitan's 1950 rededication services. Scurlock's archive even contains images of Metropolitan's ground level auditorium, later renamed Frederick Douglass Hall, before the installation of an elevated platform and theatrical lighting. Close analysis of both of the aforementioned images reveals that Conway Wallace's mural was already installed at the time of this event, thus dating Conway's mural much earlier than the 1958 date the artist ascribed. It is important to note that Metropolitan AME hosted major events that Scurlock Studio did not record. For instance in 1955, Leontyne Price gave an operatic performance, host by the Young Adults Club.



denomination in Washington DC as indicated by the photographs of Metropolitan, the Financial Department building and the denominational branches it housed from the 1930s forward. By the 1930s, Metropolitan AME Church consistently enlisted Scurlock Studios to photograph select events in the life of the church. In 1937, Scurlock Studios photographed a play reenacting a British coronation ceremony, written and directed by Mrs. Claudia McConnell, as a fundraising effort. Augusta Andrews reported on the event for the African American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, explaining the event would feature a replica of King George's coronation, performed by children.<sup>167</sup> (Figure 3.41) Even requesting decorations from the wife of British ambassador to the U.S., McConnell orchestrated this grand event as "...a part of the celebration of the AME Sesqui-Centennial" held in Memphis, Tennessee during the summer of 1937.<sup>168</sup> Metropolitan remained a site where a range of African American cultural expressions were celebrated, from beauty pageants to patriotic performances.<sup>169</sup>

For Metropolitan, this tradition continued throughout the twentieth century as indicated by an annual photograph of church officers, taken by a Scurlock Studio photographer. (Figure 3.42) This photograph from the 1930s exemplified this business relationship. Framed by Metropolitan's signature granite columns, the group is divided into two rows, with one of the congregation's most influential laywomen, Julia West Hamilton (1867-1958) positioned in the

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<sup>167</sup> Augusta Andrews, "Metropolitan Church Features Coronation," 5 June 1937, *Pittsburgh Courier*, <<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers%2023/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier%201937/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier%201937%20-%200007.pdf>> (accessed: March 10, 2015). For more information on the history of *The Pittsburgh Courier* see Andrew Bunie, *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier: Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974).

<sup>168</sup> Augusta Andrews, "Metropolitan Church Features Coronation," 5 June 1937, *Pittsburgh Courier*, <<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers%2023/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier%201937/Pittsburgh%20PA%20Courier%201937%20-%200007.pdf>> (accessed: March 10, 2015).

<sup>169</sup> "Pageant Closes Metropolitan Centennial Celebration", *Washington Tribune*, 22 Oct 1938, Metropolitan Church file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington DC.

center.<sup>170</sup> As a leader in a myriad of local and national organizations such as the Washington Council of Church Women, Julia West Hamilton always promoted her religious home—Metropolitan AME Church. Even the *Washington Post* reported on her influence during the 1950s. A journalist, S.L. Fishbein, outlined her anniversary plans for the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, noting that “Mrs. Hamilton is proudest of the fact that she has been a member of the Metropolitan AME Church for 70 years and is chairman of its trustee board.”<sup>171</sup>

The 1950s marked a period where female leaders made their presence permanent through portraiture at Metropolitan AME Church. The large painted portrait of Phillis Wheatley YWCA President, Julia West Hamilton presented to the congregation is evidence of this shift in the portrait tradition. (Figure 3.43) Life-long church member, Thelma Jacobs recalled that events were not held at the church without Hamilton’s permission.<sup>172</sup> She marshaled the nation’s leading figures such as Mary McLeod Bethune to Metropolitan AME Church. The Scurlock Studio documented her significance in two images: the 1934 image of her greeting the Scottsboro Mothers at the YWCA and the 1946 quarter-length portrait. (Figure 3.44) Both images present Julia West Hamilton as a poised figure serving her community. In 1959, a year after her death, her son and the Julia West Hamilton Club presented to the congregation a half-length portrait painted by an African American artist, Stewart Anderson.<sup>173</sup> The painting visually conveys her as

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<sup>170</sup> “Mrs. Hamilton West (Obituary),” *The Washington Post*, 24 Feb 1958, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: March 20, 2014). Her obituary said this of her father: “Her father, Thomas W. West, was taught to read by his owner’s daughter. When the Civil War broke out he was able to read about it and ran away to join the Union Navy.” This detail establishes a foundation for Julia West Hamilton’s commitment to education and civic service. She would go on to work with women’s organization to serve Union soldiers for forty years. In addition to being a member of Metropolitan for seventy years, West Hamilton was active in civic life as a member and leader in the Old Community Chest, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Association of Colored Women’s Club, Federation of Women’s Club and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

<sup>171</sup> S.L. Fishbein, “Wheatley Y Plans Two Anniversaries,” *Washington Post*, 24 May 1955, *Washington Post* 1877-ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed: April 10, 2015).

<sup>172</sup> Thelma Jacobs, interviewed by the author, digital voice recording, Washington, D.C., 6 April 2014.

<sup>173</sup> “Artists Ball,” *Ebony*, 4 (Sept, 1949):42, Library of Congress. It is possible he has been documented as Stuart Anderson, former member of Art Students League. Although there is very little information on the

imposing figure with a warm, stoic, open pose. The oil paint allowed for a layering of pigment that resulted in depicting her skin as smooth as well as the visual texture of her iridescent clothing.<sup>174</sup> This painted portrait is an important part of memorializing the enduring role women have served in shaping African American space and indicates the church's role as cultural repository.

Metropolitan AME Church houses another oil portrait of Dorothy Irene Height—a trailblazer who is celebrated as a “founding matriarch” of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>175</sup> By the late 1930s, she had risen through the organizational structure, becoming Executive Director of the Harlem YWCA.<sup>176</sup> In 1957, the year that Height was selected to be the national president of National Council of Negro Women, a little known artist named Leonard Ray painted Height's portrait.<sup>177</sup> (Figure 3.45) Height's image was widely circulated during the mid-twentieth century. While the written and spoken histories behind this painting have been lost to time, the inclusion

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artist, it is possible that this photograph published in a 1949 *Ebony* layout that reported on the Arts Students League Ball. Here the artist is referred to as Stuart Anderson.

<sup>174</sup> A major function of all elements of a portrait is to visually describe the sitter. The subtle blue hue may be a reference to her historical African American service sorority, Zeta Phi Beta. The portrait of Julia Hamilton West exemplifies how this congregation participated in art patronage practices and used material means to construct their own history. This tradition was advanced in the late twentieth century. Lula Cole Dawson broke church's fundraising goal by raising 75,000 for the church in 1992. “Dawson Breaks Fundraising Record at Metropolitan AME,” *The Washington Afro-American*, 13 Jun 1992, Metropolitan AME Church vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, D.C.; “In Memorium,” Unidentified newspaper, 28 Feb 1959, Metropolitan Church file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, D.C. The donation was commemorated in an “In Memorium” entry in an unidentified newspaper.

<sup>175</sup> Bart Barnes, “Dorothy I. Height, founding matriarch of U.S. civil rights movement, dies at 98,” *The Washington Post*, 21 April 2010.; “Dorothy I. Height, Chair and President Emerita, National Council of Negro Women,” < <http://ncnw.org/about/height.htm> > (accessed: May 19, 2015). Early in her twenties, Height demonstrated her ability by serving as the leader of the United Christian Youth Movement in 1933 and mediating the 1935 Harlem Riots. Both Julia West Hamilton and Dorothy I. Height shared the distinction of leading the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA in DC.

<sup>176</sup> Dorothy I. Height, “The Adult Program of the YWCA among Negroes,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 14, No.3 (Summer, 1945), JSTOR. That same year of 1943, Scurlock Studio photographer captured Height as a volunteer for National Council of Negro Women, assisting Mary McCleod Bethune at an event. Height also advocated for various causes in print. In 1945, an essay on adult education that emphasized YWCA successes was published in *The Journal for Negro Education*.

<sup>177</sup> “NCNW Chit Chat,” *Jet Magazine*, 28 Nov 1957, as republished on Googlebooks. In fact, *Jet Magazine* recognized her as the newly installed president in a photograph of Height alongside other NCNW leaders with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

of Height's portrait in Metropolitan's church holdings offers an alternative to unsubstantiated oral histories of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. visit to Metropolitan AME Church during the 1960s.

Metropolitan AME Church's *Untitled (Portrait of Dorothy Height)* by Leonard Ray, advances the legacy of materially honoring leaders of the African American community. The portrait adheres to a conventional portrait design, by featuring a quarter-length view of the sitter. Although posed at an angle, she gazes out at the viewer. The artist produced a luminous effect in the green gradation that comprises the background pictorial space. Leonard Ray made an effort to naturalistically render Height by attempting to reproduce effects of light. For instance, Ray translated shadow by layering lightly saturated mauve hues that darkened the golden beige pigment of the sitter. With this material inclusion, Dorothy Height joined the pantheon of African American leaders who consistently visited Metropolitan AME Church, making it the AME bastion of political and cultural capital. Ray's painted portrait stands as a testament to Height's frequent pilgrimages to the "cathedral of African Methodism."<sup>178</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which Metropolitan AME Church's material and visual legacy has evolved to represent generations of cultural advancement and self-determination. Metropolitan AME houses a collection of Episcopal portraiture that extends the cultural work of Bishop Richard Allen's 1785 portrait. This study examined the various instances where photographs of Metropolitan's Gothic Revival elevation or sanctuary communicated ideas of cultural identity or socio-political positions. In addition to portraiture and architectural images, Metropolitan AME's history is also captured across the material objects housed in the church

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<sup>178</sup> The portrait of Dorothy Height is housed in the lower auditorium of the church. One of Height's final visits to the church was for the funeral of her peer in the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks.

ranging from a stained glass window program to a candelabra gifted by Frederick Douglass. This chapter advances Kymberly Pinder's recent research on African Methodist Episcopal mural traditions initiated by Chicago's Quinn Chapel AME Church by exploring the story of Wallace Conway's *Ascension of Christ* mural. During the late 1950s and 1960s, Metropolitan Church members promoted Conway and their sanctuary by circulating photographic postcards and Christmas cards. All elements of this examination have sought our evidence of the lived history of Metropolitan AME Church in the visual and material history of the space. By examining how images are employed to convey meaning and the connotations ascribed to materials housed at Metropolitan, this chapter has demonstrated a chronological, material and image-based consideration of the site that enhances conceptions of African American artistic and cultural traditions.

The archives for Addison Scurlock's studio contain several photographs of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church which supports my hypothesis that the AME church remained a consistent patron of Scurlock Studios photography from the 1920s through the late twentieth century.<sup>179</sup> The photographic legacy of Metropolitan was continued throughout the twentieth century, taking on new connotations and layers of significance. By 1972, cropped images of Metropolitan's exterior were included in *Jet* magazine's coverage of funeral services for US Ambassador to Liberia, Samuel Westerfield.<sup>180</sup> In 1976, the *Washington Post* published photographs of Metropolitan's roof repairs under the title, "Face Lift."<sup>181</sup> The brief description identified Metropolitan as "one of

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<sup>179</sup> Church bulletins cover incorporated Scurlock photographs for special occasions such as the 1919 Mortgage Burning and Thanksgiving service.

<sup>180</sup> E. Fannie Granton, "VIP Protocol Marks the Last Rites of Diplomat," *Jet*, 10 August 1972, as republished on Googlebooks. This three page feature concluded with an image of pallbearers carrying the casket through the central entry bay, with the granite columns visible.

<sup>181</sup> This use of newspaper outlet to maintain Metropolitan's place in public mind was also used the 1940s to fundraise for late 1950s remodeling, where Wallace mural was installed as evidenced in several unidentified Metropolitan AME Church file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington DC.

the District's historic landmarks," and touted the renovation project as costing an estimated 1.2 million dollars.<sup>182</sup>

In the 1990s, Metropolitan reasserted its legacy as a political and spiritual center for the African American community and its allies by hosting several Presidents and Vice Presidents of the United States.<sup>183</sup> In 1993, African American media outlets celebrated the selection of Metropolitan AME Church to host the Morning Prayer Service for the Inauguration of President William Jefferson Clinton. The mainstream media commemorated the event with a photograph of the Clinton family in the sanctuary. But most African American outlets circulated photographs of Pastor William P. DeVeaux, his wife, Dr. Pamela DeVeaux and presiding Bishop H. Hartford Brookins greeting the newly elected president on the steps of Metropolitan's entry bay, as seen in the February 8, 1993 *Jet* layout.<sup>184</sup> These images prohibit a complete view of the church. In fact, in the February 22 edition, *Jet* magazine accused the congregation and organizers of prohibiting equal access to the event for the Black press.<sup>185</sup> In fact, the VHS jackets for the tapes of the 1993 prayer service feature a frontal outline of the church's elevation. In this way, Metropolitan has

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<sup>182</sup> "Face Lift" *Washington Post*, 9 Jul 1976, Metropolitan AME Church file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington DC.; "Judge Refuses to Order Fund To Repair Historic Church," *Washington Post*, 13 Jan 1987, *Washington Post* 1877-ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed: April 22, 2015); "Historic D.C. Church Closed; Blame Nearby Construction," *Jet Magazine*, 26 Jan 1987, as republished by Googlebooks; "Church Files \$40 Million Damage Suit; AME Bishops Announce Their Support," *Jet*, 20 Apr 1987, as republished by Googlebooks. Earlier that year, the *Washington Post* covered the plentiful examples of Metropolitan members making financial sacrifices and obligation to fund the renovation. A little over ten years later, the congregation under the leadership of the Rev. William P. DeVeaux, orchestrated a media campaign to accompany their 1986 lawsuit to receive compensation for "irreparable injury" to the structure following the construction of the adjacent American Chemical Society twelve story office building. In 1987, *Jet* magazine featured a photograph of Metropolitan alongside encroaching construction with the headline, "Historic D.C. Church Closes; Blames nearby Construction."

<sup>183</sup>Thelma Jacobs, "Metropolitan AME Church: a Timeline of Historic Events," <<http://www.metropolitanamec.org/almanac.asp>> (accessed: March 10, 2013). While there are few photographs from this visit, Vice President George H. W. Bush and his family visited Metropolitan in 1981 to hear his aid, Rev. Thaddeus Grant, deliver a sermon.

<sup>184</sup>"Black Play Biggest Role in Clinton Inauguration," *Jet Magazine*, 8 Feb 1993, as republished by Googlebooks.

<sup>185</sup>"First Black D.C. National Cathedral Chief Usher Guided Marshall Funeral," *Jet Magazine*, 22 Feb 1993, as republished by Googlebooks.

continued to develop the visual tradition of employing the Gothic Revival building to represent this materialization of African American cultural, political and spiritual advancement.

The images of the sanctuary took on symbolic connotations at the close of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century as the American press visually documented the Presidents Clinton and Obama in the historic sanctuary.<sup>186</sup> The common image from the 1993 prayer service is an aerial view of the first family surrounded the presidential cabinet. Both African American and mainstream news sources captured President William J. Clinton with his family seated in the center pew closest to the pulpit. (Figure 3.46)<sup>187</sup> In both the 2011 and 2013, photographs of President Barack Obama's visits to Metropolitan AME show, the family seated one row behind where the Clintons sat.<sup>188</sup> Seemingly nestled within the congregation, perhaps unknowingly, the Obamas sat diagonally across from the pew that bears the name of Midwestern African American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. Another symbolic inclusion in the photographs of the 2013 visit is the African textiles that drape the pointed arches that embellish the gallery balustrade. This décor, furnished by a congregational member, adorns the sanctuary on special occasions as a material homage to the African origins of African American culture. (Figure 3.47)

Metropolitan AME Church also boasts a photographic archive that includes a long list of international dignitaries and African American pioneers.<sup>189</sup> In 2005, the sanctuary was

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<sup>186</sup> Thelma Jacobs, "Metropolitan AME Church: a Timeline of Historic Events," <<http://www.metropolitanamec.org/almanac.asp>> (accessed: March 10, 2013). Although no photograph is known to exist, President Jimmy Carter came to Metropolitan for A. Philip Randolph's memorial service in 1979.

<sup>187</sup> "National Report: Clinton Inauguration," *Jet Magazine*, 10 Feb 1997,. In 1997, *Jet Magazine* replicated this composition but captured the shot from a closer position from the side set of pews. This photograph also shows the Clintons integrated into the congregation, with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton seated next to the sister of Metropolitan's then pastor, Rev. Dr. Louis-Charles Harvey.

<sup>188</sup> Hamil R. Harris and Peter Wallstein, "Marking Holiday at Metropolitan AME, Obamas Get Invite," *Washington Post*, 17 Jan 2011 ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>189</sup> Richette L Haywood, "Can Myrlie Evers-Williams Save the NAACP?," Oct 1995, *Ebony*, 42, as republished by Googlebooks .In 1995, *Jet* reported on Myrlie Evers-Williams' installation ceremony as the Board Chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at Metropolitan.

photographed during the funeral of Civil Rights Movement pioneer and lifelong AME member, Rosa Parks. Her lacquered wooden casket, flanked by floral arrangements, remained centered at the base of the pulpit, materially harmonizing with the bright pine wood of the altar, pews and balcony. Metropolitan AME Church honors this moment on their website by using the photograph of Civil Rights icon Dorothy I. Height, speaking at the base of pulpit during Parks funeral services, reinforcing Metropolitan as a site for both African American male and female civil rights pioneers. Metropolitan's pointed arch motif remains visible in all representation of the chancel.<sup>190</sup>

Perhaps the congregation's use of portraiture reached a mythic apex in 2013 as the congregation welcomed President Barack Obama the day before his second inauguration. The church bulletin distributed to each attendee featured the portraits of Bishop Richard Allen, President Barack Obama and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. imposed over a grayscale outline of the Gothic Revival façade. (Figure 3.47) Each circularly-cropped portrait formed an implied triangle, with Allen and King at the base. Visually, this cover suggests a trajectory featuring the historic figures that broke down racial barriers in their audacious leadership in American society. This mythic composition implies incorrectly that King had any affiliation with the DC congregation.<sup>191</sup> But in the case of this program cover, the congregation leads the country to consider President Barack Obama as extending and augmenting the tradition of confronting the social functions of racial and economic oppression historically led by Allen and King.

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<sup>190</sup>The coverage also photographed the pallbearers carrying Park's casket down the granite staircase of the central entry, thus situating Parks in this tradition of Metropolitan's architectural visual history, alongside female leaders like Julia West Hamilton. Another image that circulates of this occasion captures Oprah Winfrey offering words at the funeral from the pulpit.

<sup>191</sup> After examining both mainstream and African American news outlets, my research concludes there is no known historical source that proves he once preached at the church. It is interesting to consider the reasons why King may have not addressed Metropolitan in his visits to Washington, DC during the 1950s and 1960s.



The last two chapters have aimed to demonstrate how Metropolitan AME Church has materially and visually augmented a denominational history. Inheriting the cultural legacy of Israel Bethel and Union Bethel, Metropolitan AME Church was home to organizations and individuals who shaped the contours of African American life in Washington, D.C. This case study set out to establish the material, cultural and stylistic histories of a space that has maintained visibility in American culture since its completion. The lived history of the church reflects shifts in socio-cultural and political perspectives. In addition to serving as the national church and “shrine of African Methodism,” Metropolitan AME Church helped develop African Methodism in the city.<sup>192</sup> Whereas Metropolitan AME Church was intended to communicate Classical Black Nationalist concerns and Victorian ideals during the late nineteenth century, by the end of the twentieth century, Metropolitan became an arena for the African American community’s most visible leaders representing a range of ideological perspectives.

The legacy of material investment and cultural influence that Metropolitan AME Church represents remains relevant today. Following the mid -1970s restoration of Metropolitan AME Church, the congregation began to solidify its identity in the local community by maintaining the tradition of political oration. In May 1984, Angela Davis visited the church to speak and raise funds for the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression.<sup>193</sup> This legacy continued through the 1990s as the church hosted South African political activist, Winnie Mandela. *Washington Post* staff writer, Paul Hendrickson underscored Metropolitan AME Church’s significance in his coverage, stating, “Frederick Douglass and Paul Laurence Dunbar and Mary McLeod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt and Alain Locke and Martin Luther King, Jr.,

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<sup>192</sup> Metropolitan’s ancestral congregation perpetuated the AME doctrine by bringing about the organizations of Ebenezer AME Church (Georgetown) and St. Paul’s AME Church.

<sup>193</sup> “Angela Davis on Jackson, Reagan” *The Washington Afro-American*, 19 May 1984, Metropolitan AME Church vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr., Library, Washington, DC.

have worshipped here in their time, but this was Winnie's time."<sup>194</sup> On that occasion, Mandela shared the pulpit with figures including Dorothy Height.<sup>195</sup> In her address, Mandela said, "We need your prayer. We need you to help us, to teach us, how you treated racism."<sup>196</sup> She also offered encouragement for civil rights efforts asserting, "Keep the pressure on. Keep the pressure on. Keep the pressure on."<sup>197</sup>

This study of Metropolitan has traced its origins as deeply rooted in the local African American community in DC and the national network of African Methodism. Black church scholar, Gayraud Wilmore described the AME bishops of the late nineteenth century with these words, "Mighty men, physically and mentally, men who started at the bottom and hammered their way to the top by sheer brute strength; they were the spiritual progeny of ancient African chieftains and they built the African Church in America."<sup>198</sup> This vision was supported by generations of women and men who recognized the importance of the tradition contained within the walls of Metropolitan AME.

In the twenty-first century, Metropolitan AME Church continues to be a beacon for cultural advancement and solidarity. In the summer of 2015, the visibility the denomination received as a result of the racial terrorist attack on "Mother" Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina brought Metropolitan Church to national attention again. For the local DC community, Metropolitan AME Church became a visual focal point for media coverage on the event. In the days following the 2015 massacre in Charleston an anonymous bomb threat was

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<sup>194</sup> Paul Hendrickson "Winnie Mandela," *The Washington Post*, 25 June 1990, *The Washington Post* (1877-), ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database (Accessed: June 2, 2015).

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, "The Deradicalization of the Black Church," *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, third edition. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 167.

made against Metropolitan AME Church.<sup>199</sup> Images of the church exterior circulated alongside images of the memorial service the congregation held for the Emmanuel Nine. (Figure 3.49)

Five days after this threat that resulted in the circulation of images of the façade, the church hosted a previously scheduled event to announce a commemorative twentieth anniversary of the Million Man March on the Washington Mall. From this iconic AME pulpit, Minister Louis Farrakhan dismissed the conciliatory gesture of the removal of the confederate flag by stating, “Pull a flag down and you’re supposed to go away satisfied? (pause) You don’t know what justice looks like!”<sup>200</sup> Today, Metropolitan AME Church stands as site of protest, borne out of a national tradition that continues to serve as pulpit from which to articulate critical ideas concerning the African American condition in America. Metropolitan AME Church’s own artist-congregant, Furman A. Johnson viewed Metropolitan AME Church as embodying the aims of the integrationist movement. Indicating the material significance of the edifice, Johnson asserted “...this is really integration. We are still in our own building, yet integrated among the white race.”<sup>201</sup> Metropolitan AME Church, replete with the material and visual histories that have layered the space over time, continues to realize the dreams of her visionaries.

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<sup>199</sup> Shomari Stone and Andrea Swalec, “Bomb Threat Made Against Metropolitan AME Church, Sources Say,” 4NBC Washington < <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/-Bomb-Threat-Made-Against-Metropolitan-AME-Church-Sources-Say-308551841.html>> (Accessed: Sept. 25, 2015); Threat Against Metropolitan AME Church Investigated, Cleared” 9WUSA, < <http://www.wusa9.com/story/news/local/dc/2015/06/19/bomb-threat-ame-church/29011069/>>(Accessed: Sept. 25, 2015).

<sup>200</sup> Sam Ford, “Hundreds Rally at Metropolitan AME Church for ‘Justice or Else’” ABC 7 News, < <http://www.wjla.com/articles/2015/06/hundreds-rally-at-metropolitan-ame-church-for-justice-or-else--115022.html>> (accessed: July 10, 2015).

<sup>201</sup> Furman A. Johnson, “Our Readers Say: Church on Trial,” *The Afro-American*, n.d., Metropolitan AME Church vertical file, Washingtonia Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washington, DC.

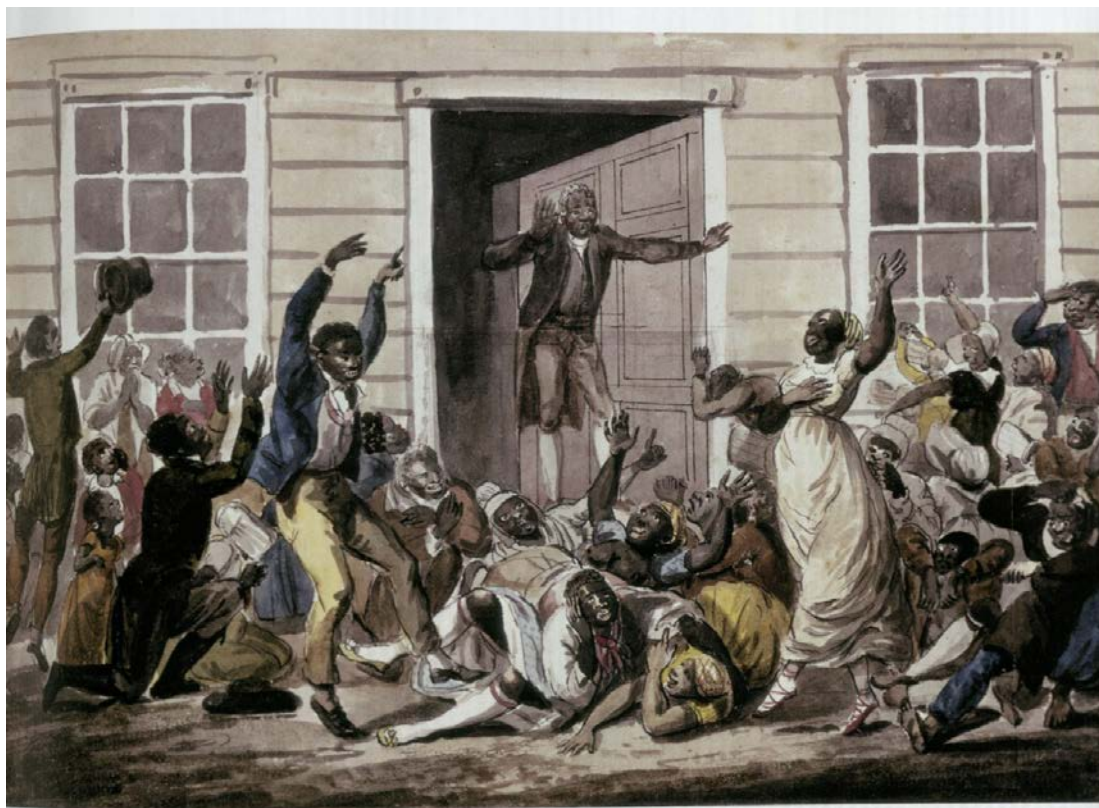


Figure 3.1. Patrovich Svinin, *Negro Methodist Holding a Meeting*, 1818-1819, watercolor, as republished in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I*. IV, Part 2, IV, Part 2, Bindman, David, Henry Louis Gates, Karen C. C. Dalton, and Ladislav Bugner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) Hickey & Robertson, Houston/The Menil Foundation.

This painting offered a Russian visitor's impression of a Negro religious gathering. Perhaps inserting stereotypical caricatures, the artist pictures the religious community outside the confines of the religious space.



Figure 3.2. Patrovich Svinin, Detail of *Negro Methodist Holding a Meeting*, 1818-1819, watercolor, as republished in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the American Revolution to World War I*. IV, Part 2, IV, Part 2, Bindman, David, Henry Louis Gates, Karen C. C. Dalton, and Ladislav Bugner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) Hickey & Robertson, Houston/The Menil Foundation.

The artist emphasizes the hypersexualization of the black female body in the central group of three women that form an implied triangle. This type of imagery functioned to deflate the social impact of intuitions like the AME denomination.



Figure 3.3. Thomas Worth, *A Change of Base*, from *The Darktown Series*, 1883, lithograph, Library of Congress.

Worth's illustration exemplifies the common caricature of the African American preacher that circulated in American popular print. This was the type of imagery AME iconography aimed to counter.



Figure 3.4. Initiation Ceremonies of the Darktown Lodge-Part First: The Grand Boss Charging the Candidate, from The Darktown Series, 1887, lithograph, Library of Congress.

This print is indicative of the way in which white supremacist ideology attacked African American institutions such as the African American church and fraternal organizations. The founder of the denomination was also recognized as a Prince Hall Mason.



Figure 3.5. Unidentified Artist, *Portrait of Bishop Richard Allen*, c.1785; pastel, Collection Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, DC.

Thought to have been executed in 1785 during his visit to Baltimore for the inaugural Methodist Episcopal Conference, *Portrait of Bishop Richard Allen* is the earliest known image of the denominational founder. This image's production and provenance demonstrate how the AME denomination used visual culture as a means to augment a tradition of self-determination.





Figure 3.6. Alfred White, *Bishop Richard Allen Memorial*, c 1876, Carrara marble, “Mother” Bethel AME Church Museum, “Mother” Bethel AME Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, photograph by author.

To commemorate the AME Church’s contribution to American culture, the AME Church commissioned Alfred White to design and carve a bust and gazebo to house the structure in an outdoor park for the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.



Figure 3.7. John Sartain, *Portrait of Bishop Richard Allen*, c. 1891, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC.

Although the origins of Metropolitan's portrait are unknown, this enlarged portrait seems to be a version of John Sartain's portrait. Sartain was recognized in the *Christian Recorder* as capturing Methodism's historic scenes.



Figure 3.8. Scurlock Studios Photographer, Detail of *Metropolitan AME Church Choir*, 1938, Metropolitan AME Church (on-site archives), Washington, DC, author photographed the reproduction; original housed at Smithsonian American History Museum.

This photograph documents the position Metropolitan AME's *Bishop Allen Portrait* had in the sanctuary during the early twentieth century. The portrait hung to the right of the pulpit, facing *The Episcopal Rose Window*.



Figure 3.9. Unidentified photographer, *Portrait of Bishop Benjamin Arnett*, n.d., Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC.

This photograph is representative of the design and style of the group of Episcopal portraits in Metropolitan AME Church's collection from the late nineteenth century.

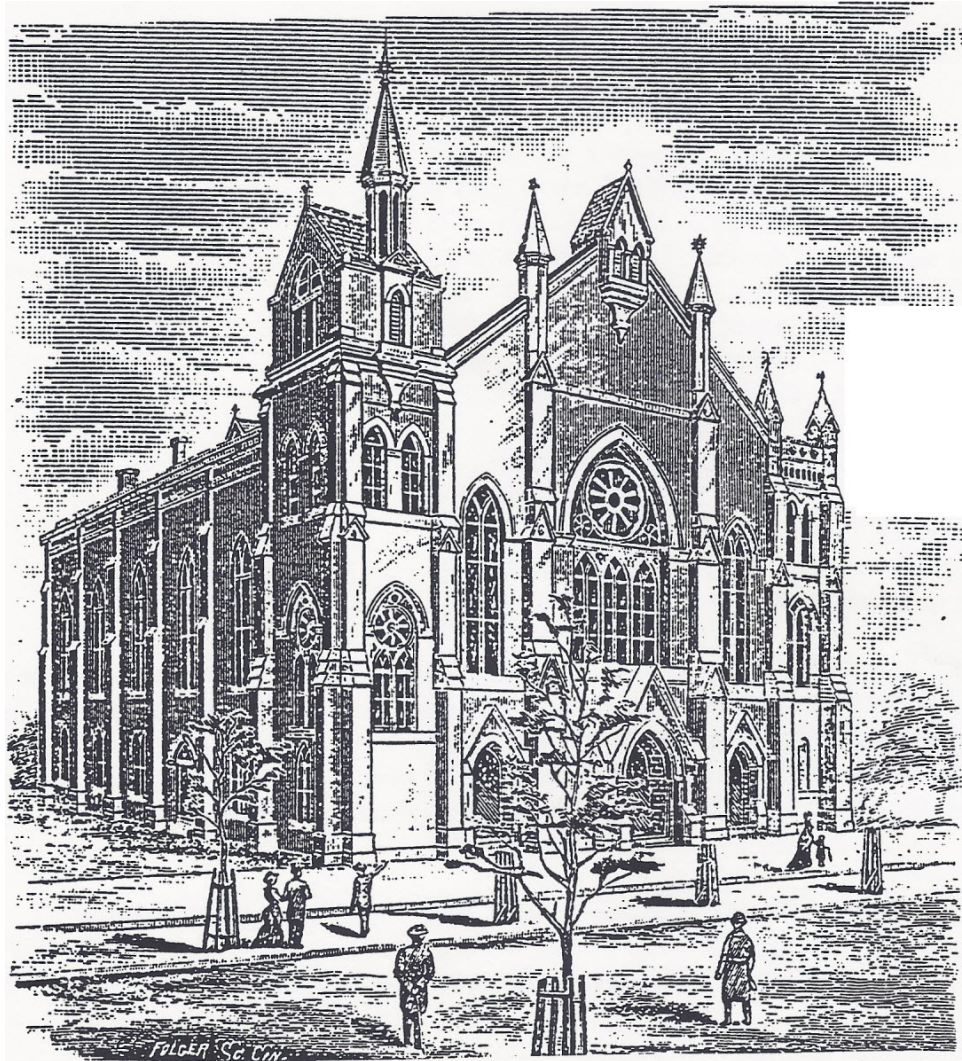


Figure 3.10. Folger, *Metropolitan AME Church*, reproduction of pen illustration, Metropolitan AME Church Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington DC.

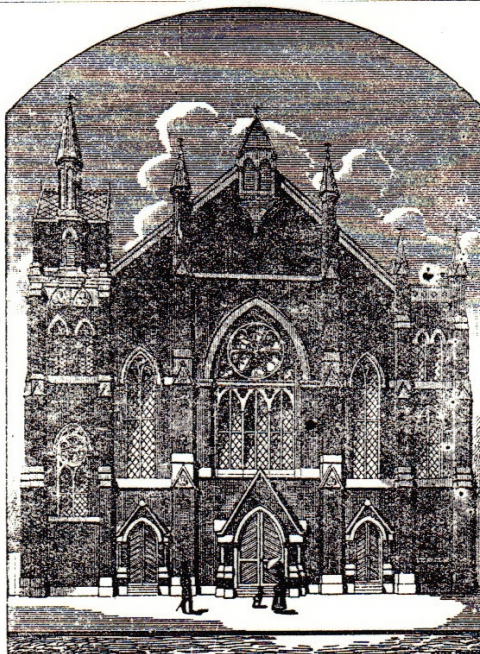
Using formal elements to communicate Gothic Revival characteristics, the artist employs the pointed-arch to establish repetition in shape and value to emphasize the memorial stained glass windows. The divisions of the façade, complemented by the geometric vertical thrusts of the windows, established volume and spatial depth.

# The Bethel-Metropolitan Church Organ

Vol. 1

WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1906.

No. 5.



## In Memory of Miss Fannie Geary

She is at rest with God. Peace be to her ashes.

To Mrs. Geary, Mrs. Waddleton, and Family, to you, do the Church Organ and Metropolitan Church offer heartfelt sympathy.

On last Friday night in the Library was organized a Ladies' Auxillary to our little Church Organ—watch for this in our next issue.

Are you watching our little Church Organ grow? Isn't this an improvement over last week's issue?

If you have expected to see something that is not in this issue, look for it in our next week's issue.

Our Church Directory will not appear

The Woman's Day organization will hold its Semi-Annual meeting, Sunday, at 3 o'clock, December 16th. Miss E. F. G. Merritt will give a very important talk for parents. Miss M. I. Throckmorton and Mrs. M. C. Beckett will have places on the program. Solos by Misses Kennedy and Throckmorton.

Prof. L. B. Moore, Dean of the Teachers' College, of Howard University, will address Bethel Literary next Tuesday night on the subject, "What the Negro has done for Himself."

The Helping Hand Circle will hold its next regular meeting Monday night with its president, Mrs. A. B. Bailey, 2210 12th Street, N. W.

The Junior Choir will hold a special call meeting Friday night in the church by order of president, C. R. Thomson.

Figure 3.11. *The Bethel-Metropolitan Church Organ*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1 Dec 1906 Simms Family Papers, 2-41, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington DC.

In 1906, the church newspaper, *The Bethel-Metropolitan Church Organ*, featured a frontal elevation of the structure. This image retains the formal similarities of the first drawing in its cropped, isolated view, the imposing scale and Neogothic details of granite tracery, buttresses and stained-glass windows.



Figure 3.12. Frederick Douglass, Jr. and C.F. Douglass, *Metropolitan AME Church*, c.1888, original print at Cedar Hill, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC; reproduction in collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

This appears to be one of the earliest photographs taken by the grandson of Frederick Douglass. Newspaper articles document the presentation of this framed photograph to Douglass during a birthday celebration at Metropolitan AME Church. This photograph also documents how Metropolitan AME Church was situated between two smaller buildings, thus emphasizing its monumentality.

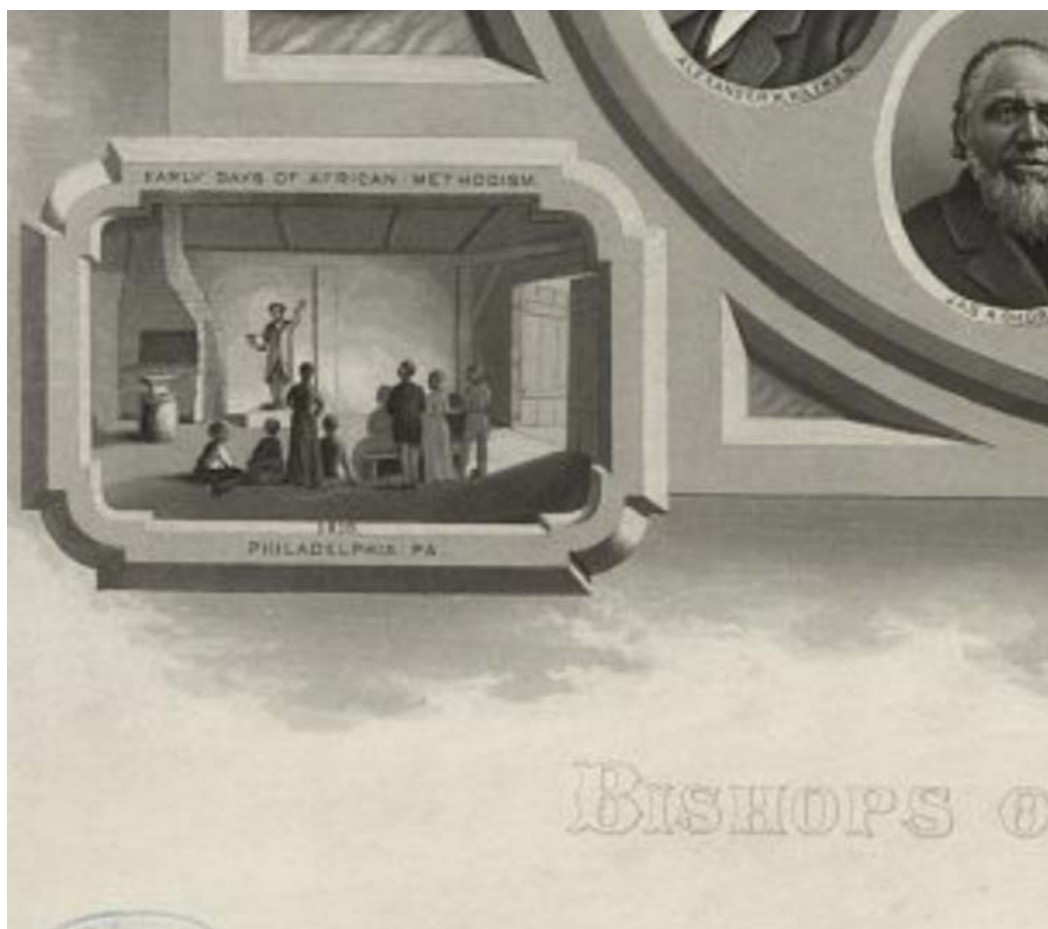


Figure 3.13. Rev. J.W. Burley, Detail of *Bishops of the A.M.E. Church*, c.1876, Washington, DC, Print attribution: J.H. Daniels, Library of Congress.

This detail of A.M.E. Minister Burley's print documents the tradition of representing A.M.E. interior liturgical space.



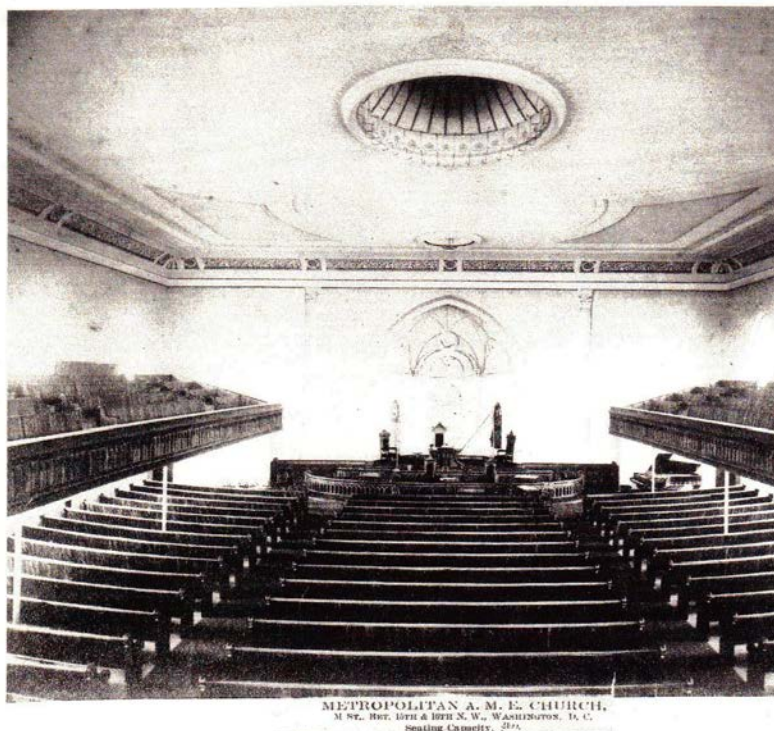


photo hangs in the West Parlor  
 Frederick Douglass N.Y.C.  
 Washington D.C.

FRDO 320

Figure 3.14. Reproduction of Charles F. Douglass, *Metropolitan AME Church (Interior)*, c.1886-1888, original in West Parlor, Cedar Hill at the Frederick Douglass National Site, Washington, DC. Reproduction from private collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

This is the earliest known photograph of Metropolitan AME Church.

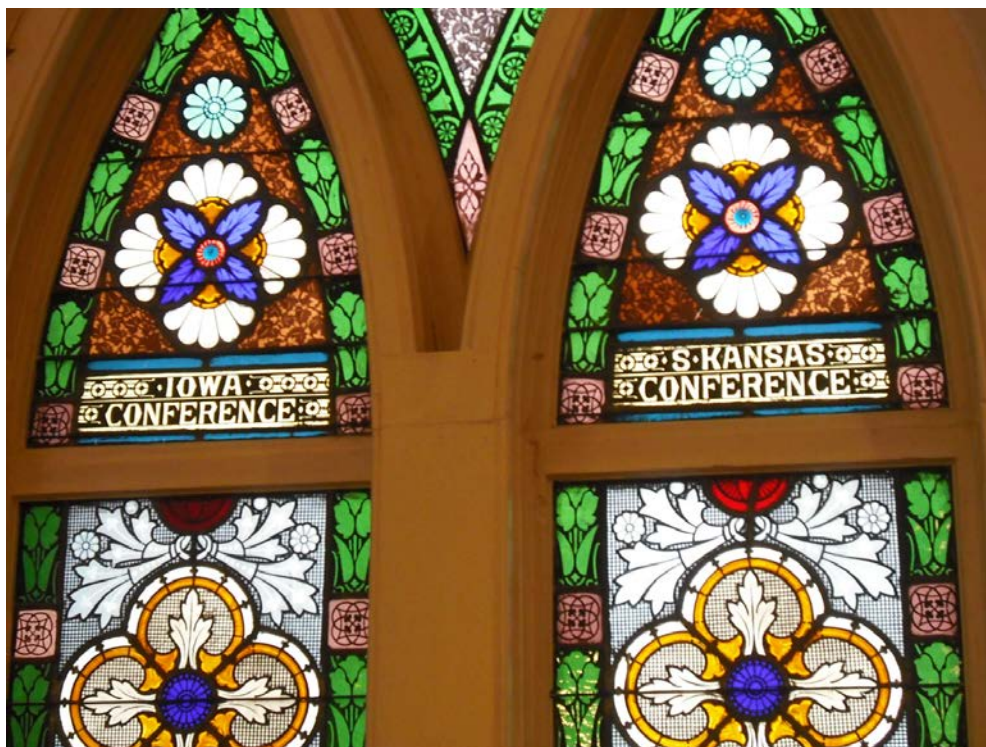


Figure 3.15. H.F. Gernhardt, *Cross Memorial Window*, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, photograph by the author.

Metropolitan AME Church's stained glass window program is united by the deep saturated jewel tones and patterned, textural variety. Gernhardt creates spatial depth by overlapping foliage patterns, in a symmetrical design.



Figure 3.16. H.F. Gernhardt, *Episcopal Rose Window*, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, photograph by the author.

The crowning feature of Metropolitan AME Church's stained glass window programs is the *Episcopal Rose Window*. Perhaps influenced by AME visual culture from the late nineteenth century, denominational founder Richard Allen occupies the central position. The names and ordination dates of early bishops of the AME Church radiate from the center.

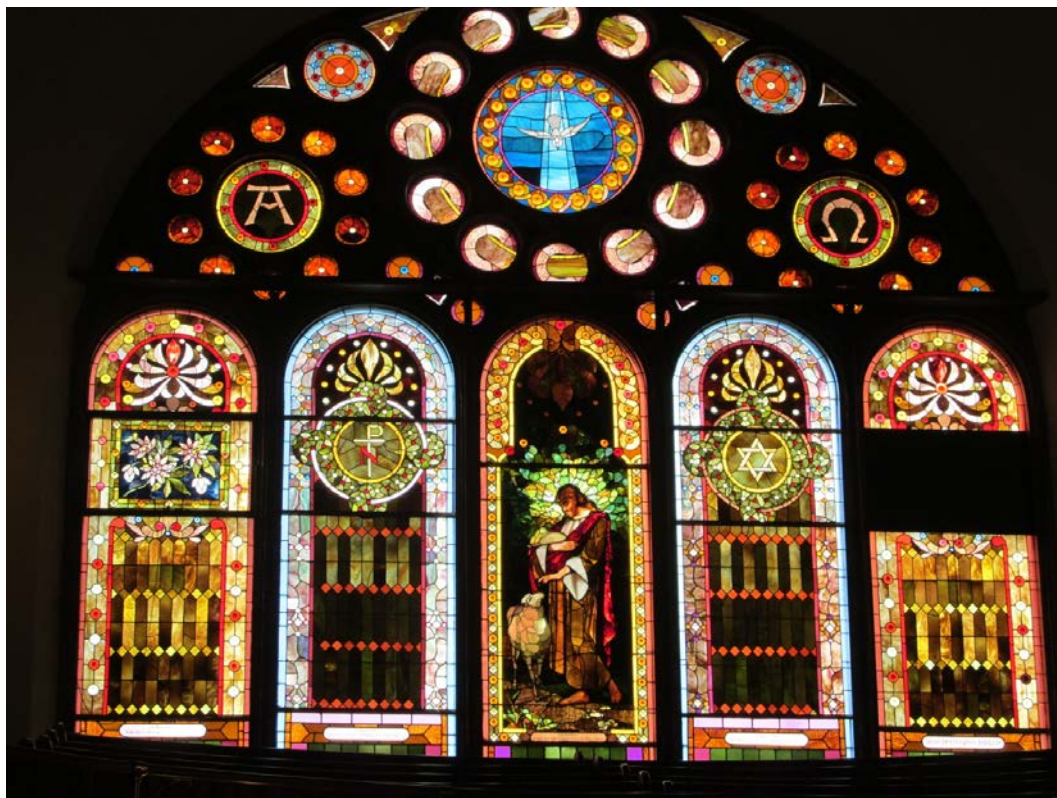


Figure 3.17. Unknown stained glass artist in Heidelberg, Germany, *Rounded Arch Stained Glass (featuring Christ)*, c. 1890, “Mother” Bethel AME Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Photograph by the author.

“Mother” Bethel AME, the founding church of the denomination, boasts a German stained glass window programs that dominates the worship space. The Romanesque Revival program features a series of rounded arch windows that features a pictorial composition. Unlike Metropolitan AME Church’s, the window illustrated above featured a figurative rendering of Christ. Christ is pictured as a shepherd, coddling a lamb. The additional components of the Holy Trinity are represented through the dove and Alpha and Omega Symbols. The central window with Christ shows the Modernist influence, of figures like La Farge in the approach to color and form. In their windows, both Metropolitan AME Church and “Mother” Bethel AME Church contain Masonic symbols.



Figure 3.18. Rev. J.W.Burley, “Bishops of the AME Church,” c.1876, framed print housed in Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC. Print attribution: J.H. Daniels, Library of Congress.

Both Metropolitan AME Church and “Mother” Bethel AME display a copy of this print by an AME minister, Rev. J.W. Burley. Burley’s application of the nineteenth century vignette design may have influenced Gernhardt’s *Episcopal Rose Window* at Metropolitan AME Church.

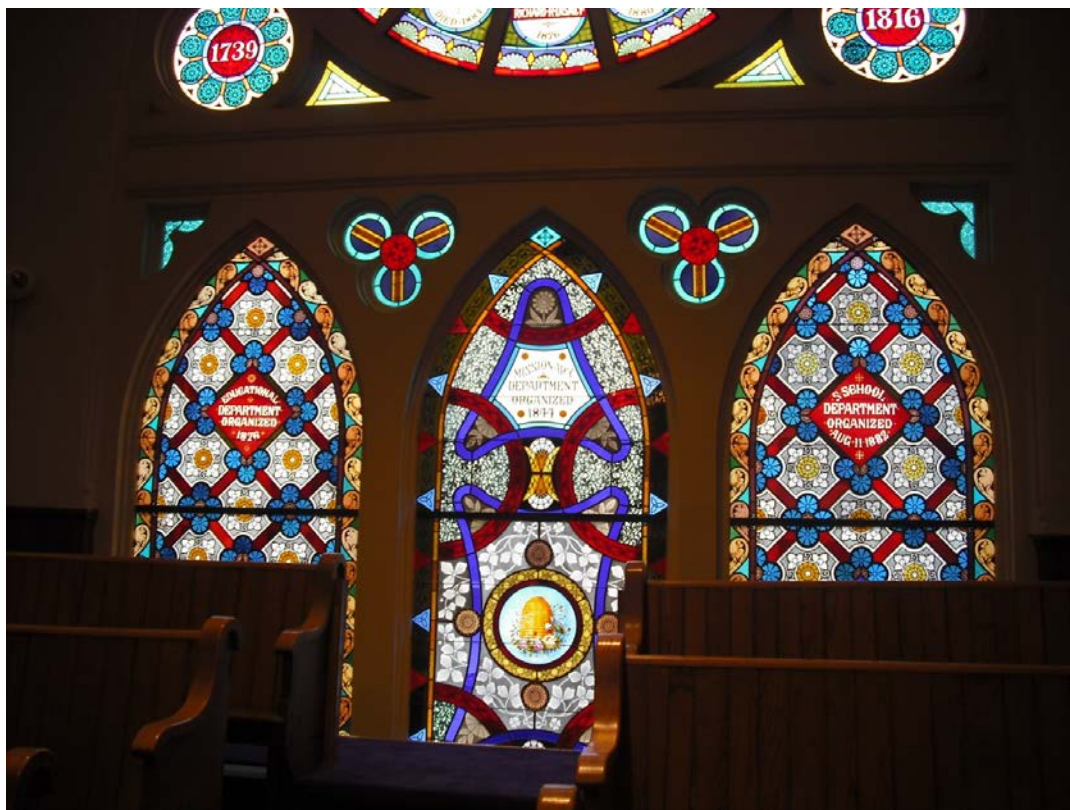


Figure 3.19. H.F. Gernhardt, *Denominational Department Memorial Windows*, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, photograph by the author.

Visualizing the denominational hierarchy, this bracketed group of windows bears the names of the denominational departments that undergird the activities of the Episcopacy. The laymen and laywomen of the church comprise these organizations and practice the foundational ministries of the AME Church.



Figure 3.20. H.F. Gernhardt, *Missionary Department Memorial Window*, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC. Photograph by the author.

The central window, dedicated to the Missionary Department, emphasizes the triangular and circular elements of the Neo-gothic style, in the blue intertwined concave triangle and red semi-circle tracery that dominates this window.



Figure 3.21. H.F. Gernhardt, “Ark” Memorial Window, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, as reproduced in Ruby M. Gourdine, Carolyn McClain et al. *Metropolitan’s Stained Glass Windows: A Journey through A.M.E. History* (Washington D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church Commission on Public Relations, 2004), photograph by Noah D Magee, Jr. & Rafi Reyes.

Bishop Benjamin Arnett’s groups four southern AME Conferences under the ark symbol. In this way, the churches formerly in the bastion of slavery are symbolically protected in this stained-glass window program.



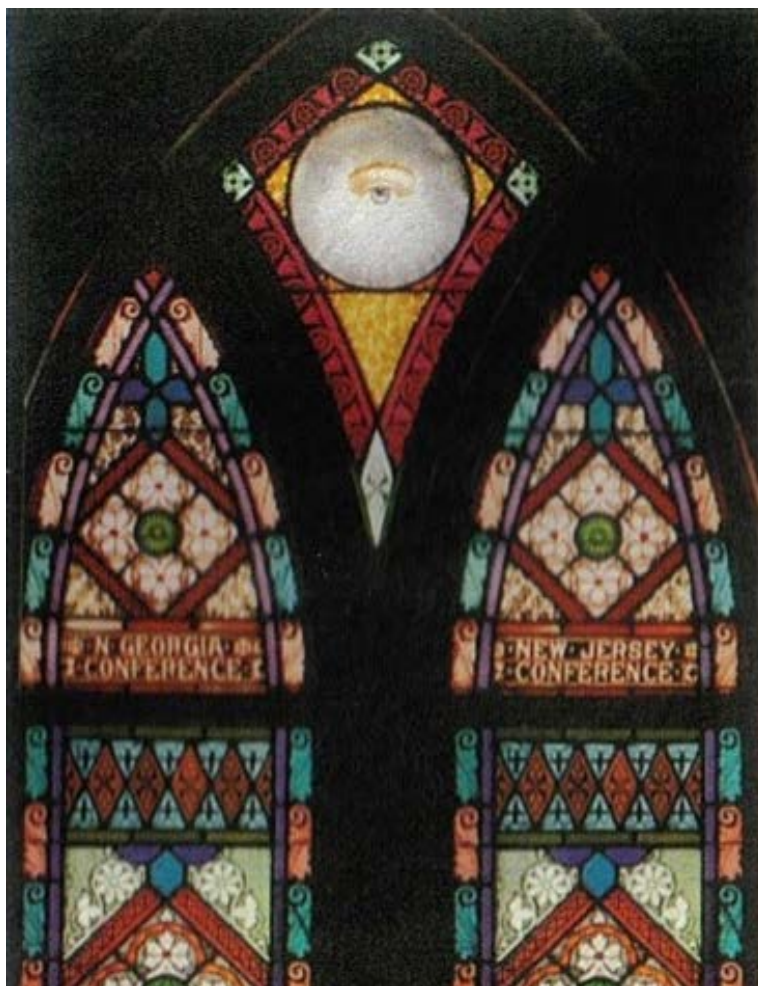


Figure 3.22. H.F. Gernhardt, “All Seeing Eye” Memorial Window, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC., as reproduced in Ruby M. Gourdine, Carolyn McClain et al. *Metropolitan’s Stained Glass Windows: A Journey through A.M.E. History* (Washington D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church Commission on Public Relations, 2004), photograph by Noah D Magee, Jr. & Rafi Reyes.

Citing Psalm 121:4, church published descriptions characterized the “All Seeing Eye” as representing universal observation. This could possibly be interpreted as four conferences that should be surveilled for their success in housing influential AME institutions like Wilberforce University in Ohio or the large population of AME members from churches throughout New York and New Jersey. This symbol is also associated with Masonic iconography, thus linking it with the stained glass windows at “Mother” Bethel.



Figure 3.23. H.F. Gernhardt, *West Arkansas Conference & Ontario, Canada Memorial Window*, c. 1885-1886, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, as reproduced in Ruby M. Gourdine, Carolyn McClain et al. *Metropolitan's Stained Glass Windows: A Journey through A.M.E. History* (Washington D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church Commission on Public Relations, 2004), photograph by Noah D Magee, Jr. & Rafi Reyes.

The circular window represents the expansion of the denomination in both southern capitals and new centers in the African Diaspora such as Canada, Haiti and Liberia. The geometric rhythm of the circular pendants and the diamond shapes, comprise three alternating layers.



Figure 3.24. Scurlock Studios Photographer, *Metropolitan AME Church Choir*, 1938, Metropolitan AME Church (on-site archives), Washington, DC. Author photographed the reproduction; original housed at Smithsonian American History Museum.

Frederick Douglass's candelabras were a permanent fixture of Metropolitan AME Church's decorative program into the late twentieth century. The pair was a material symbol of the congregation's association with late nineteenth century Victorian ideals.



MR. DOUGLASS IN HIS LIBRARY.

Figure 3.25. Unidentified photographer, *Mr. Douglass in his Library*, “The Frederick Douglass Souvenir,” Archibald Grimke Papers, 39-762, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

This photograph circulated in a souvenir pamphlet that documents Douglass’s domestic space. His home was filled with objects associated with late nineteenth century Victorian decorative styles as seen in this view of this library. This supports the interpretation of Douglass’s candelabras as a gift that expressed cultural and stylistic solidarity with Metropolitan AME Church.



Figure 3.26. Scurlock Studios Photographer, Detail of *Metropolitan AME Church Choir*, 1938, Metropolitan AME Church (on-site archives), Washington, DC. Author photographed the reproduction; original housed at Smithsonian American History Museum.

The brass candelabras were originally designed to operate by gas. The stand of the candelabras emerges from a column-like base and terminates with a light that forms the apex of the candelabra. Three concentric semi-circles comprise the arms of the structure, with a bulb at each end. The small hanging medallions function to formally frame the central pier, thus providing visual variety and texturally engaging the light omitted from the bulbs above.



Figure 3.27. Honorary Pew Plaques from main floor of Metropolitan AME Church Sanctuary, Photograph the author.

Church member Jefferson S. Coage is responsible for donating the Douglass pew plate, which anchors a tradition of textually inscribing the space with historical import. In the case of Frederick Douglass, it establishes a material rhythm with the candelabras he gifted the congregation in 1895.

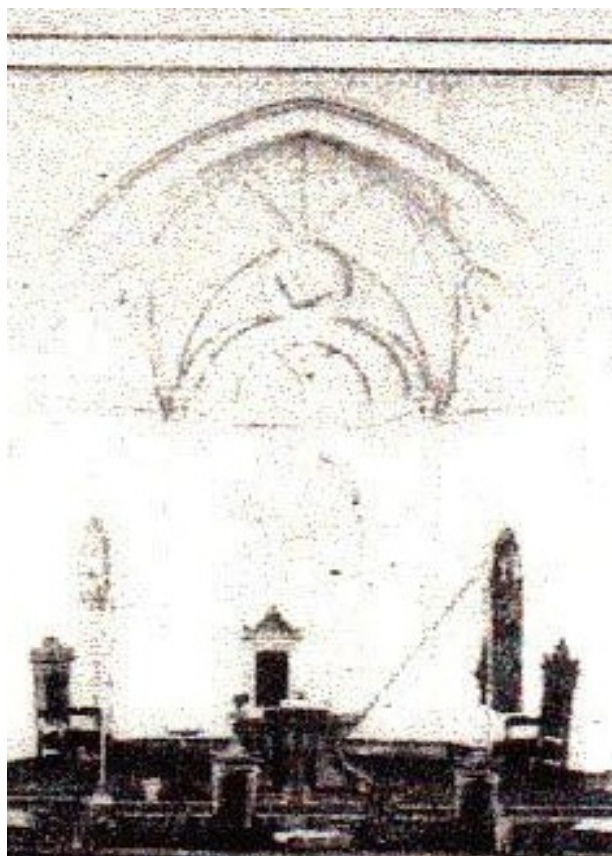


Figure 3.28. Frederick Douglass, Jr. and C.F. Douglass, *Metropolitan AME Church*, c.1888, original print at Cedar Hill, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC; reproduction in collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

This is a detail of the earliest photograph of Metropolitan AME Church's sanctuary. It documents that from the late nineteenth century the recessed pointed arch was decorated with fresco painting. It appears an open Bible was the focal point of this early fresco.

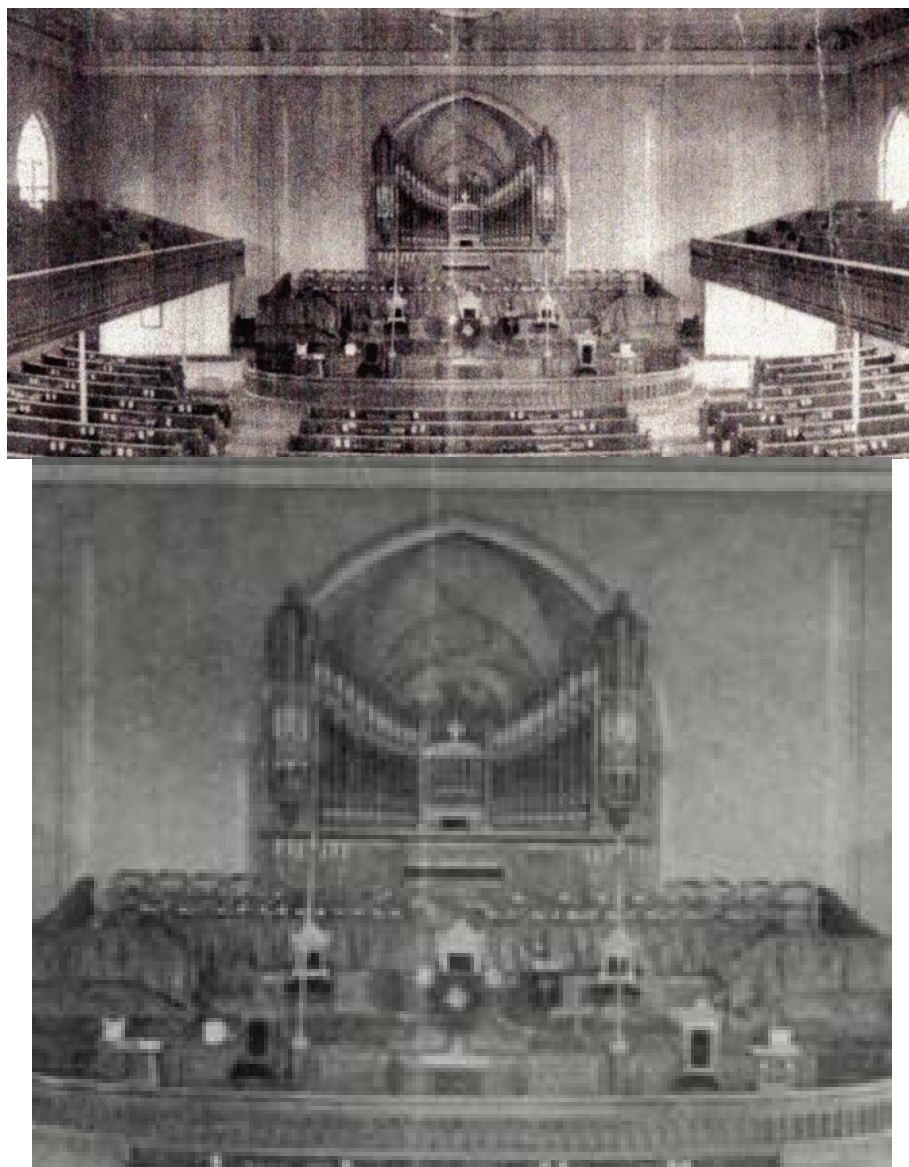


Figure 3.29. Unidentified photographer, *Untitled (Interior of Metropolitan AME Sanctuary)*, c. 1919 as reproduced in *Historical Book, Version 3*, Washington, D.C.: Metropolitan AME Church, 2010; reproduction in collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

This photograph of the sanctuary taken one year after this anniversary shows the congregation had organ pipes installed over the width of the pointed arch, shrouding the lower portion of the early fresco.





Figure 3.30. Furman A. Johnson, *Samuel Praying*, n.d, oil on panel, Metropolitan AME Church (on-site archives), Washington, D.C. Photograph by author.

As indicated in his obituary, Furman A. Johnson painted murals and smaller compositions such as this for his home church. He became one of the church's fiercest defenders during attempts to sell the church.



Figure 3.31. Wallace X. Conway, *Ascension of Christ*, c.1950-1970s, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC; reproduction in collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

This mural was painted by African American artist, Wallace X. Conway. It was completed as a part of renovation of the 1949-1950.



Figure 3.32. Wallace X. Conway, Detail of *Ascension of Christ*, c.1950-1970s, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC; reproduction in collection of Thelma Jacobs, Lanham, MD.

The central Christ figure measures nine feet tall. The frail palm trees situate Christ as ascending into paradise. The Christ appears to bear the influence of the popular representation of Christ by Warner Sallman.



Figure 3.33. Photographic still from Spencer Williams, *The Blood of Christ*, 1945, film.

As seen above, this film features repetitive scenes of a novice faith Christian demonstrating the visual adoration the image of Christ. The hypervisibility of images of an Anglo-American Christ accounts for this mode of representation as being normalized in American visual culture.



Figure 3.34. Allan R. Crite, *Stations of the Cross*, 1942, oil on panel, Melvin Holmes Collection of African American Art, on loan to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Crite, who often referred to himself as a liturgical artist, produced both white and black representations of Christ.



Figure 3.35. Image of Three Wooden Crosses installed in Metropolitan AME Church's recessed arch, c. 1970s, Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC, photograph by author.

During the late 1970s, the congregation had these crosses installed to replace the *Ascension of Christ*.

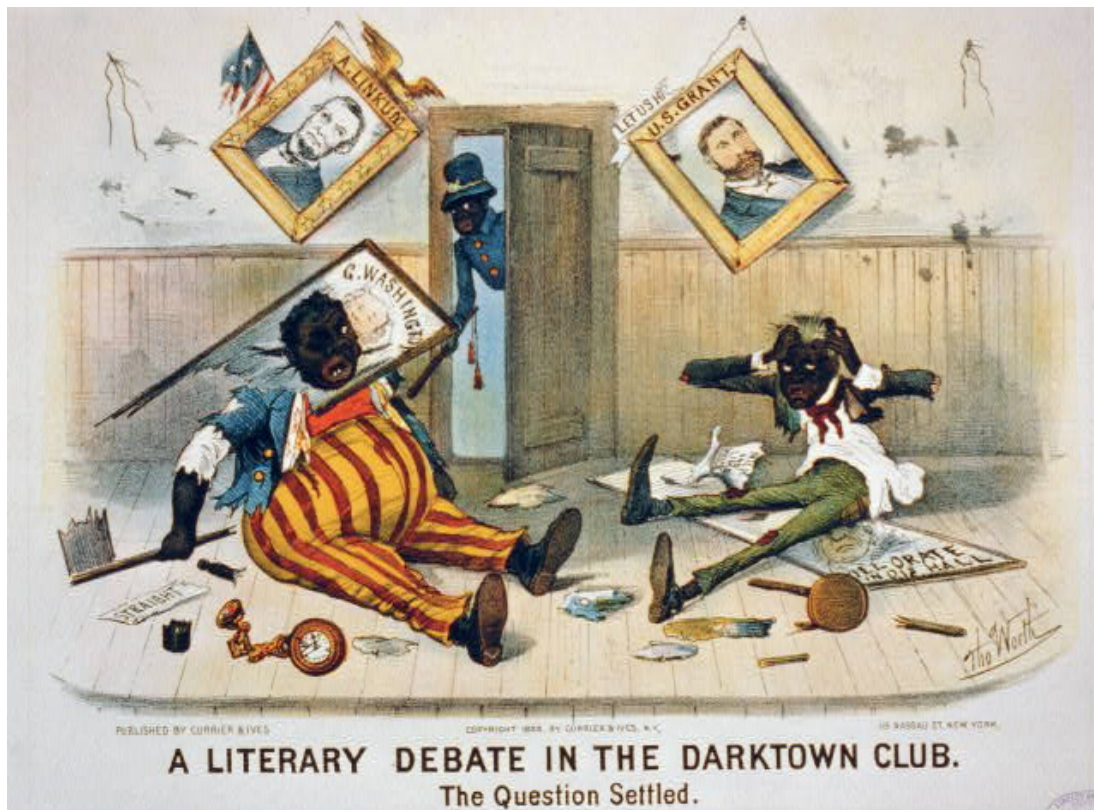
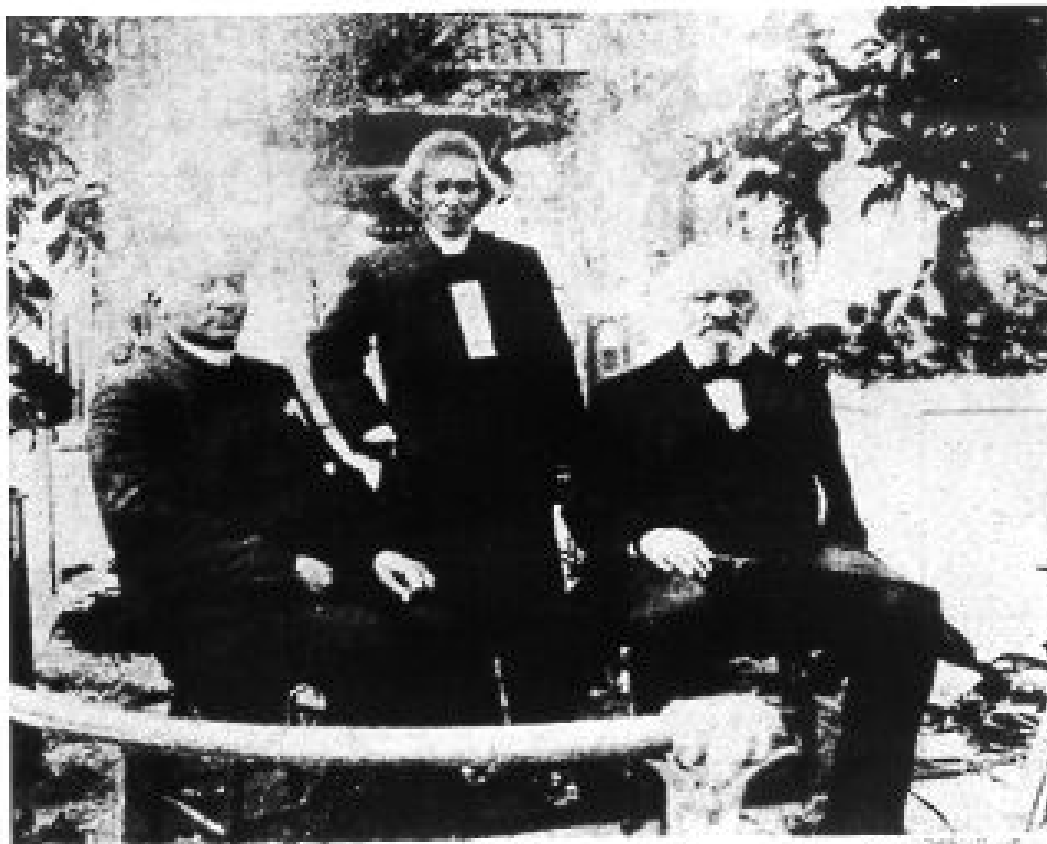


Figure 3.36. Thomas Worth, *A Literary Debate in the Darktown Club: the Question Settled*, from *Darktown Series*, 1885, lithograph, Library of Congress.

Visually documenting the presence of such intellectual activity in African American churches was necessary to contest widely circulated images such as *The Darktown series* 1885 print, *A Literary Debate in the Darktown Club: The Question Settled*.



Left to right: Bishop B. W. Arnett, Bishop Daniel Payne and Frederick Douglass

Figure 3.37. Unidentified photographer, *Untitled (Bishop B.W. Arnett, Bishop Daniel Payne and Frederick Douglass)*, n.d., Wilberforce University Archives, Wilberforce, Ohio  
 <<http://www.socialwelfarehistory.com/eras/african-methodist-episcopal-a-m-e-church/>> (Accessed: July 13, 2015)

This image represents the enduring relationship Frederick Douglass maintained with the leading figures in the denomination. In fact, one of his closest friends was Bishop Henry McNeal Turner. Just as Richard Allen's portrait countered stereotypical image of Black Methodism in Philadelphia, the entire collection of portraits housed at Metropolitan hangs as a testament to a legacy concerned with racial advancement. Although the archival source does not identify the photographer, it is possible that Midwestern African American photographer J.P. Ball could have captured this portrait.



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**AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**


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rence.—From 1864 to 1867 all of the freed in Virginia were members of the annual conference, and reported their names. On May 10, 1867, in Richmond, was organized the Virginia Annual Conference at the organization were J. D. S. Hall, George T. Watkins, R. T. Mas, Isaac J. Hill, J. H. Offer, Peter shall, Aaron Pindle, Jacklin Strange, F. Wayne, William F. Williams, Will-H. Plato, John W. Diggs and J. H. Hill as the first members. Revs. J. Brown, R. A. Hill and William H. Hill took part in the proceedings, but not the conference. The first appoint-

District, J. D. S. Hall, presiding in Richmond Station; Richmond Mission, J. K. Plato; Port Royal District, M. Marshall; Portsmouth District, A. Pindle; Smithfield District, George Williams; Norfolk District, J. H. Offer, presiding elder and pastor. St. John's collections were as follows: Conference Association, \$12; missionary from the district, \$102.31. The sessions from 1864 to 1867 were held eight times in Richmond, seven times in Portsmouth, five times in Salem, Staunton and Roanoke, four times in Eastville, Hampton, Suffolk, Petersburg, Smithfield and Berkeley. The first president has been: Wayman, 1867-72, and in 1879; J. M. Brown, 1877-80; Payne, 1880; Ward, 1880; Grant 1892; Gaines, 1892-1900; Lee, 1901-4; Coppin, May, 1916. Among those who were honored by the general conference were: J. M. Brown, 1877-80; Payne, 1880; Ward, 1880; Grant 1892; Gaines, 1892-1900; Lee, 1901-4; Coppin, May, 1916. Among those who were honored by the general conference were: J. M. Brown, 1877-80; Payne, 1880; Ward, 1880; Grant 1892; Gaines, 1892-1900; Lee, 1901-4; Coppin, May, 1916. Those who have served as president have been Revs. J. N. V. Thomas,

it was he who not only conceived the idea, but formulated and offered the plan which was adopted by the bishops at Newport, R. I., August, 1880, of having literary societies for all the churches and congregations through the entire Connection, the pastors and presiding elders being required to organize and keep in operation a literary society for each church, setting apart one night in each week for literary exercises. In November, 1881, Bishop Daniel A. Payne organized the Bethel Literary and Historical Association. He was also the founder and organizer of the most famous



MISS MARIE A. D. MADRE  
President Bethel Literary Society.

branch of the Literary, that of the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church, of Washington, D. C. There was a growing demand for some institution at the National Capital in which

Figure 3.38. Detail of Page 367 layout from Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 367, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015).

The first portraits to represent Metropolitan AME Church in Wright's *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* picture two Bethel Literary Association officers, Ms. Marie A.D. Madre and Ms. Mattie R. Bowen

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THE CENTENNIAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE

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Douglass, Rev. Arthur W. Upshaw, Annie Geary (Waddleton), John W. Cromwell, Chanie A. Patterson, Sadie F. Tyree and Mattie R. Bowen. The Literary soon became popular. Every Tuesday night the society was invariably well attended. The Washington correspondents of the colored papers spread the news; and in other centers of population the topics discussed at the Literary were reviewed, until the organization may be said to have shaped the thought of the country. Other presidents were, Rev. James Dean, Lewis H. Douglass, John W. Cromwell, James Storum, Reuben E. Smith, George M. Arnold, John H. Rector, Edward A. Clarke, Kelly Miller, Lafayette M. Hershaw, William H. Richards, F. L. Cardozo, Jr., Shelby J. Davidson, George W. Jackson, L. G. Gregory, A. D. Washington, S. M. Dudley and Garnet C. Wilkinson. Two women have served as presidents: Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, who was vice president to John H. Rector and completed his unexpired term; and Miss Marie A. D. Madre, the present incumbent, who enjoys the unique distinction of being the only woman elected to the office, as well as being the only individual who has held the position by repeated elections covering five years of service.

ett J. Waring, F. H. M. Murray, Lafayette M. Hershaw and Kelly Miller. Miss Amanda R. Bowen (or as she was popularly known, Mattie Bowen), was a very great factor in the evolution of this society. The name of no other woman stands out more conspicuous than that of Mattie Bowen, who for 31 years was treasurer and safe counsellor.

In the past more than now the programs were planned in the Advisory Board Meetings. It required at first much time and more diplomacy to regulate these matters and avoid the public personalities and other snarls which often would have been inevitable. After the first two or three months, programs almost shaped themselves. Large meetings and absorbingly interesting discussions ensued. For 20 years this was a prevailing characteristic, in which Bishops H. M. Turner, James A. Handy, Wesley J. Gaines, B. F. Lee and L. J. Coppin gave invariably their active support, while the entire Bench of Bishops gave their moral support, thereby contributing to the success of the Literary as a distinctive Church auxiliary. The pastors who have contributed their influence and support are G. T. Watkins, Theophilus G. Steward, John G. Mitchell, John W. Beckett, John T. Jenifer, J. Albert Johnson, Daniel G. Hill, O. J. W. Scott,



TRUSTEES, METROPOLITAN A. M. E. CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Frederick Douglass, Edward W. Blyden, Joseph C. Price, John H. Welch, I. N. Ross and C. H. Stepteau.  
 Alexander Crummell, Bishops B. F. Lee and Benjamin T. About 18 years ago, after the passing of Frederick Doug-  
 Tanner, John M. Langston, Blanche K. Bruce, Dr. Alex. T. lass, Langston and Price, whose names were almost sui-

Figure 3.39. Page 368 layout from Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 368, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015).

The church trustees are located indoors, while the other group portraits are taken on the steps of Metropolitan. The subtle differences in the trustee photograph are evident in John A. Simms' position in an ornately carved chair that is emphasized by the placement the hand on chair to the left of Simms's head.



Figure 3.40. *Class Leaders, Metropolitan Church, Washington DC*, in Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1916), 369, republished (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) < <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright/wright.html>> (accessed: January 10, 2015).

The group portrait of the class leaders, laymen assigned with a set number of church members with whom to maintain contact and spiritually mentor, possibly shows an attempt from the unidentified photographer's efforts to merge other portraits into the group photograph, as seen in the disproportionate scale of the men on end of the back row.



Figure 3.41. Scurlock Studio photographer, “A Replica of the Coronation” composed and directed by Ms. Claudia McConnell, Met A.M.E. Church, Wash. DC, June 11, 1937, Silver gelatin on cellulose acetate film sheet, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC.

This event was covered by *The Pittsburgh Courier* explaining the event would feature a replica of King George’s coronation, perform by children. McConnell requested decorations from the wife of the British ambassador to the U.S. for the set décor. This performance was done in honor of the Sesqui-Centennial of the AME Church. Metropolitan was a site where a range of African American cultural expressions were celebrated, from beauty pageants to patriotic performances.



Figure 3.42. Scurlock Studios Photographer, *Metropolitan AME Church group (Church Trustees)* Silver gelatin on cellulose acetate film sheet, 1940, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC.

Scurlock Studios continued to photograph Metropolitan AME Church leaders as seen in this 1940s image. In the center is civic leader, Julia West Hamilton, who was one of the Metropolitan AME most influential members during the 1930s to the 1950s.



Figure 3.43. Steward Anderson, *Portrait of Julia West Hamilton*, c. 1958-1959, oil on canvas, Metropolitan AME Church (on site archives), Washington, DC.

This painting was given to Metropolitan AME Church by the son of Julia West Hamilton, a significant leader in the church's lay history.



Figure 3.44. Scurlock Studios Photographer, *Metropolitan AME Church group (Church Trustees)*, Silver gelatin on cellulose acetate film sheet, 1940, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC.

By the 1940s, Mrs. West Hamilton was a celebrated civic figure in Washington, DC. Both Julia West Hamilton and her son, Colonel West A. Hamilton visited Scurlock Studios to have their portraits made.



Figure 3.45. Leonard Ray, *Untitled (Portrait of Dorothy Irene Height)*, oil on canvas, 1954, Metropolitan AME Church (on-site archives), Washington, DC. Photograph by the author.

The origins of this portrait are unknown, but it serves as material evidence of the association Dorothy I. Height maintained over her lifetime.





Figure 3.46. President William Jefferson Clinton, Vice President Albert Gore and families during the Inaugural Prayer Service in 1993, as published on <http://www.metropolitanamec.org/history.asp>

This photograph documents the first Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service at Metropolitan AME Church. Several African American media outlets complained that they were not permitted in the church, thus reducing their visual documentation of the event to the Clinton Family entering and exiting the historic edifice.



Figure 3.47. President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at Metropolitan AME Church during the 2013 visit of President Barack Obama, January 18, 2013, photograph by the author.

This photograph illustrated the Obamas seated within the congregation of Metropolitan AME Church. They were seated in a row diagonally across from the pew that bears the name of Midwestern poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar.

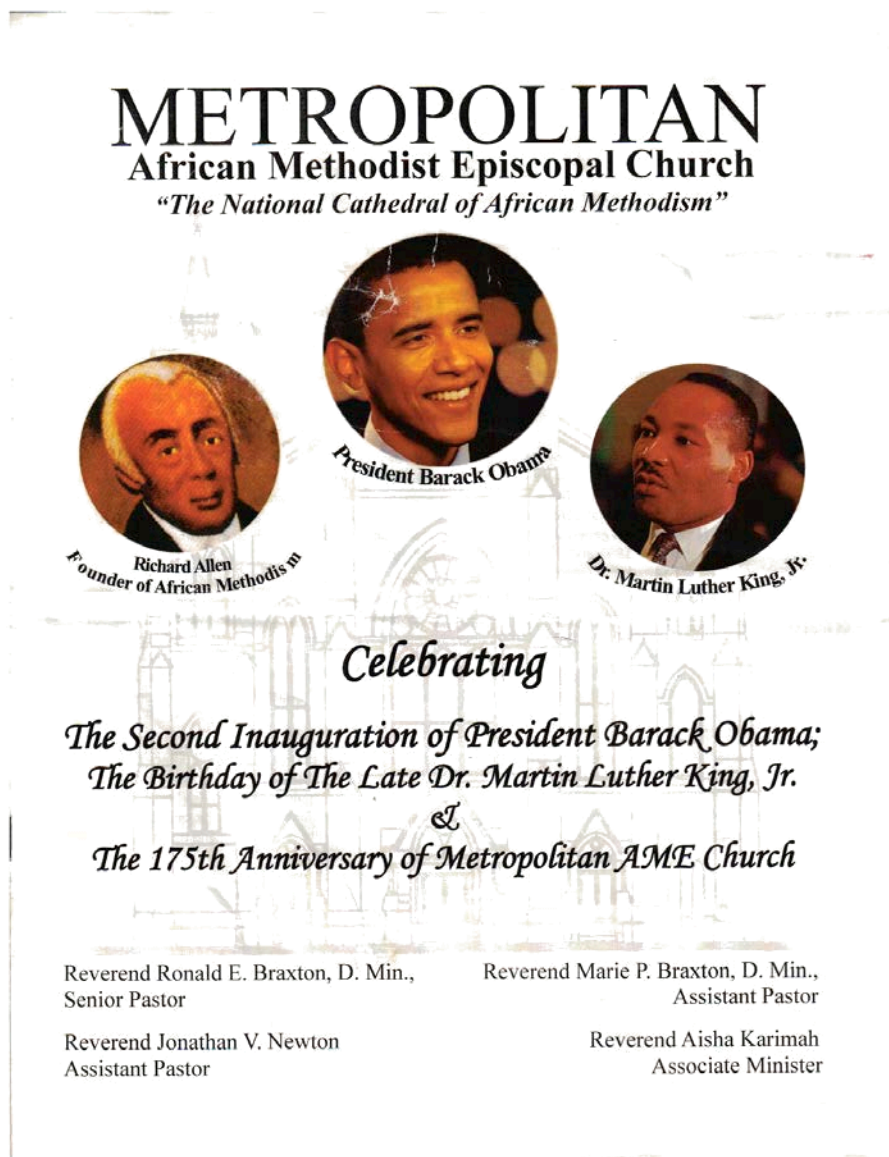


Figure 3.48. Church Bulletin on the occasion of President Barack Obama's 2013 visit to Metropolitan AME Church, 2013, from the author's collection.

This bulletin was distributed among the attendees of Metropolitan AME Church on the occasion of President Barack Obama's visit. This design only included a faint impression of the exterior of the church, but also put forth a historical trajectory of African American leaders, connecting Bishop Richard Allen and President Barack Obama.



Figure 3.49. Glynn A. Hill, Untitled, 19 Jun 2015, as published in “Charleston Shooting Adds to History of Black Churches Targeted in Attacks,” WJLA, ABC website, <  
<http://www.wjla.com/articles/2015/06/black-churches-targeted-because-of-importance-to-community-114888.html>> (accessed: July 15, 2015)

Local news coverage of the massacre at “Mother” Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC included images of Metropolitan AME’s sanctuary. This image documents the visual interventions of the contemporary congregation and the introduction of new visual iconographies.

**CHAPTER 4: “IT’S NATION TIME!”: DEFINING SPACE THROUGH RITUAL,  
THEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY ACTION AT THE SHRINE OF THE BLACK  
MADONNA, #1**

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the national landscape of black churches further diversified African American Protestant worship.<sup>1</sup> With the development of the civil rights movement driven by the mobilization during the 1950s, the black Protestant church continued to be a resource for political organization as well as socio-political and spiritual sanctuary.<sup>2</sup> The concept of black church as refuge was disrupted at 10:19 AM, September 15, 1963 when Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed.<sup>3</sup> The circulation of photographs of a marred ecclesiastical structure designed by Wallace Augustus Rayfield (1874-1941), a leading African American architect of the first half of the twentieth century, were circulated as a result of this tragic event.<sup>4</sup> The images simultaneously convey the

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<sup>1</sup> Authur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1944); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 1. Alternative religious communities such as those led by Father Divine (1877-1965) or Charles Manuel “Sweet Daddy” Grace (1881-1960) represent some of the alternative religious communities the attracted urban African Americans. The Pentecostal Movement gained momentum among during the first half of the twentieth century, led by the predominantly African American denomination, Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

<sup>2</sup> The role of the church as refuge is visually documented in the photographic archive of African American church. For instance, the central role of the church is visually documented in news photographs of the funeral of Emmett Till in 1955 at Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ (Chicago, IL).

<sup>3</sup> “Bomb Rips Negro Church, Four Girls Die in Birmingham: Two Boys Shot Dead Later as Violence Sweeps City,” *Boston Globe* (16 Sept 1963): 1; “FBI Examines Blast Rubble,” *Chicago Defender*, (18 Sept 1963): 4; “Four Children Die: Birmingham Blast Injures Twenty Three Negroes, Two Others Shot,” *Los Angeles Times* (16 Sept 1963):1.

<sup>4</sup> Allen R., Dorough, and Wallace A. Rayfield, *The Architectural Legacy of Wallace A. Rayfield: Pioneer Black Architect of Birmingham, Alabama*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010); Elizabeth M. Downing, “Wallace A. Rayfield (1874-1941),” *African American Architects: a Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945*, Dreck S. Wilson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004) 338-340. Wallace A. Rayfield received his early education from Howard University’s Preparatory School and went on to attend Howard University for undergraduate studies. After earning a degree in Classics, Rayfield moved to New York where he pursued architectural training at Pratt Institute as well as Columbia University. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture from Columbia University in 1899. He was immediately recruited by Booker T. Washington to teach at Tuskegee University. After spending eight years at Tuskegee, Rayfield founded Alabama’s first black-owned architectural firm.

vulnerability of American rights and religious freedom as well as the race-based terror that was synonymous with Jim Crow segregation.<sup>5</sup>

This iconography of black church as broken and debilitated was quickly countered by photographs of civil rights mobilization taking place in or marching from African American religious sites.<sup>6</sup> This chapter will document how a Detroit area religious community which came to be known as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 responded to the imagery of the civil right movement by creating space for a culturally empowering the Black Nationalist agenda, adorned with an aesthetic that promoted the new perspective.<sup>7</sup> As this chapter will outline, this religious community developed American religious architecture and the institution of the black church as an adaptive model for radical social intervention in African American environments.

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<sup>5</sup> Albert J. Cleage, Jr., *Black Messiah*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 115, 167. Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 pastor, the Rev. Albert Cleage often references the visuality of the civil rights movements in sermons such as “No Halfway Revolution,” and “An Enemy Hath Done This.” In the former, Cleage commences his sermon with this reflection: “I remember when the riots in Watts was going on, the front page of *Life Magazine* pictured a young black militant with a do-rag around his head. He was a symbol of what was happening, he represented the rebellion to oppression.” In “An Enemy Hath Done This,” the minister confirms the effectiveness of the civil rights visual program, stating, “We suffered with black people we had never seen before except on TV. We saw the police dogs, the cattle prods, the fire hoses and we can to understand that we do have an enemy.”

<sup>6</sup> Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011) 5-7. This text outlines a photographic history of protest in the modern civil rights movement. In addition to tracing a history speciality promoted by lynching photography practices, Raiford interrogates the hypervisibility of white violence and black resistance of civil rights photography. The scholar aptly offers this query: “What work does the photograph as a ‘disciplinary frame’ perform in narrativizing the civil rights movement?...To examine the dialectic between movement and medium, between, (cultural) visibility and (political) invisibility, we are required to ask how and why African American activists *chose* to enlist photography as part of their political strategies, across a period in which the stakes of cultural representation were often dangerously high.”

<sup>7</sup> Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 85-87. Political historian offers this definition for black nationalism: “‘Black nationalism’ is the second oldest political ideological tendency found within black political thought. More important, black nationalism provided the most enduring challenge to both the black and white liberal traditions. Black nationalism provides an ideological challenge to the *legitimacy* of American liberalism...Black nationalists’ theoretical vision of black liberation continues to be based on the contention that understanding the plight of blacks and achieving black salvation must be based on taking *race and racial oppression* as the central feature of modern world history...Consequently, core concepts of black nationalism include not only support for African American autonomy and self-determination, but various degrees of cultural, social, economic and political separation from white America.”

On November 19, 1967, almost five months after the five-day Detroit race riots, members of Central Congregational Church gathered in their 1925 Colonial Revival sanctuary for an official church meeting to address the direction of their religious community after the events which permanently marred the urban landscape. (Figure 4.1) As church documents record, a special meeting of the congregation convened after the worship service, "...to approve the incorporation of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement and the organization of the Church of the Black Messiah as the national and international missionary outreach of the Central Congregational Church."<sup>8</sup> This assembly was one of the final steps in a series of communal events and rituals that articulated reinscriptions of a radical religious identity.

Concerned with the postmodern practice that visual cultural scholar Lucy Lippard defined as naming, this Detroit congregation renamed and re-envisioned their community with the intentional selection of terms to reflect a new epistemology and cultural consciousness.<sup>9</sup> As an anchor in the Black Christian Nationalist Movement as well and Black Liberation Theology, Central Congregational Church added the designation of The Shrine of the Black Madonna to the former title in the late 1960s.<sup>10</sup> Black Liberation Theology was a theological revisionist movement that promoted a critical stance toward American Christianity which has its own history

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<sup>8</sup> "Call: Church Meeting, Sunday, November 19, 1967, 2:00 PM," 19 November 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 7-5, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This church document and other activist oriented sources housed in Cleage's papers refer to the riots as the "Detroit Rebellion" to reflect the challenge to oppressive systems that undergirded Detroit class inequality. For more information on the significance in naming this event, see Dan Georgakas, Marvin Surkin, and Manning Marable, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (1975), (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012) and Darden, Joe T., and Richard Walter Thomas, *Detroit Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990) 19-22. Lippard defines naming as "...the active tense of identity, the outward aspect of the self-representation process, acknowledging all the circumstances through which it must elbow its way."

<sup>10</sup> "Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church: Chronology,(2004)," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24, 16-22, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. According to the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church Chronology, the church's name was not official changed until 1970.

of facilitating oppression.<sup>11</sup> The literature of Black Liberation Theology was complemented by local ministerial outreach and an increased activism among African American clergy. The Rev. Cleage was at the forefront of defining black cleric activism and the practical application of Black Liberation Theology in the everyday life of African Americans.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to revising and investing the church name with terms that reference their evolving ideological adherence to Black Liberation Theology, this congregation set out to redress the narrative surrounding their building, defining it as Black Nationalist sacred space with specific social and aesthetic characteristics.<sup>13</sup> The Colonial Revival structure, erected by a predominantly white Congregational religious community in 1925, continues to bear proof of the intervention of the Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology.<sup>14</sup> Both the Black Arts

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<sup>11</sup> James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984); James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Power, Black People and Theological Renewal," *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of Religious History of African American* (1973), (New York: Orbis Books, 2006) 245.

<sup>12</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Power, Black People and Theological Renewal," *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of Religious History of African American* (1973), (New York: Orbis Books, 2006) 245.

<sup>13</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); James D. Krylo and James Cone, "Paulo Freire, Black Theology of Liberation, and Liberation Theology: A Conversation with James H. Cone," *Counterpoints*, Vol. 385 (2011): 201. Black Liberation Theology was a revisionist theological movement of the late 1960s and 1970s that resulted in the activist mobilization of segments of the black church. Whereas pastors like the Rev. Cleage forged a Black Liberation theology from the pulpit and in church ministries, academicians led by Dr. James Cones (1938- ) defined the movement with texts such as *Black Theology and Black Power* and *Black Theology of Liberation*. Dr. Cone offers this definition for Black Liberation Theology in a 2010 interview: "I would think liberation theology emerges out of economic contradictions as the primary force of it. Looking at poverty in the face, and looking at what it does to people. And what Latin American theologians do with poverty, I have done with race... It is a theology that emerges out of a ministry of service for the poor [and oppressed]."

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Donaldson, "From the Guest Editor," *International Review of African American Art*, 15, 1 (1998): 4; Samella S. Lewis, and Ruth G. Waddy, *Black Artists on Art*, (Los Angeles: Contemporary Crafts Publishers, 1969); Tom Lloyd, ed. *Black Art Notes*, (Place of publication not identified, 1971) , in Smithsonian Libraries, American Art National Portrait Gallery Library. Jeff Donaldson (1932-2004) was a principle leader in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In a 1998 editorial essay, Donaldson credits artists of African descent in the academy and in African American communities as driving the visual arts agenda of the Black Arts Movement. Some of the successes Donaldson highlights includes expanding exhibition and museum collection opportunities for black artists as well as the development of a



Movement and the Black Liberation Movement were based on new articulations of Black Nationalism as espoused by Malcolm X (1925-1965) and Amiri Baraka (1936-2014), as well as the expressive freedom of John Coltrane (1926-1967).<sup>15</sup> The Black Arts Movement was a critical cultural movement across the literary and fine arts outlets during the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>16</sup>

At this November meeting, the church body affirmed their contribution to the Black Arts Movement's mural tradition with the following statement:

On Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967, Central United Church of Christ unveiled the now internationally famous painting of the Black Madonna by Glanton Dowdell. With this event, we also launched the Black Christian Nationalist Movement founded by [the] Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr... Our international headquarters will be the Mother Church, Central United Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan, to be known as "The Shrine of the Black Madonna." Members of the churches will be known as "The Nation of the Black Messiah."<sup>17</sup>

This source continues by describing the congregation's amended social structure. In renaming and reinterpreting space and the socio-religious organization of this religious body, the Rev. Cleage and the congregants of the Shrine of the Black Madonna initiated a practice of re-presenting Black Christianity and Black material traditions. This chapter will examine the architectural and spatial histories as well as ritual adaptations that influenced and defined the

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curriculum the advances Black Arts Movement and Pan-African ideologies. I would also argue that Black Arts Movement resulted in a myriad of publications that provided new perspectives on black art (for example, Tom Lloyd's collection of essays, *Black Art Notes*) and reproductions of a broad range of black art (Lewis and Waddy, *Black Artist on Black Art*).

<sup>15</sup> Howard Ramsby, "All Aboard the Malcolm-Coltrane Express," *The Black Arts Enterprise and the Production of African American Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011)101-124.

<sup>16</sup> Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford, eds., *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006); James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup>"Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. As early as March 1953, the church was incorporated as Central Congregational Church and pursued Congregational association in their founding declaration and in their affiliation with the church that Cleage was ordained in, Plymouth Congregational Church. In January 1954, the Central Congregational Church transfer application was approved by the Detroit Council of Church and the Congregational denomination.

Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. Chapter five will address the aesthetic shifts the Shrine of the Black Madonna promoted with its decorative program.

By transforming Central Congregational Church into a “free space” for Black militants of diverse political orientations and a repository of cultural redefinition, Cleage augmented a cultural practice of community activism and championed the politicized theology of Black Christian Nationalism.<sup>18</sup> After the 1957 purchase of the 1925 structure, Central Congregational Church engaged in ritual-architectural events, thus generating new theological and aesthetic meanings as well as stylistic vocabularies that reveal a Christian component of the Black Arts movement, informed by Black Liberation Theology. Architect and architectural historian Bradford Grant posits the interpretive concept of “appropriation as resistance,” which frames the critical intervention the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 epitomizes. Grant asserts:

Environmental appropriation as resistance is the reclaiming or redesigning of an existing building or landscape to present a new identity through cultural expression. Appropriation claims and redefines a built environment, ultimately instilling in it a new sense of place and memory, defying its former past by adopting new cultural and social aspects. This resistance strategy is an assertive act opposing the authority of the established design standards through the execution of adjusted or alternative environmental design concepts. Environmental appropriation and resistance are integral to the empowerment of communities to promote a cultural identity.<sup>19</sup>

Cleage and the congregation redefined Colonial Revival ecclesiastical traditions in their occupation of Pilgrim Congregational Church. Maintaining original stylistic elements on the exterior of the structure, the Shrine of the Black Madonna uses a quintessential American architectural style as a vehicle to articulate the radical social and spiritual tenets at the core of Black Christian Nationalism.

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<sup>18</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007) 204, 253.

<sup>19</sup> Bradford Grant, “Accommodation, Resistance, and Appropriation in African-American Building,” *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, Craig Evan Barton, ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 200), 108.

Building upon the act of appropriative resistance initiated in the purchase of the church, the congregation engaged in a series of activities architectural historical Lindsay Jones refers to as ritual-architectural events. In *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* Lindsay Jones defines this mode of productive ritual-architectural events;

Thus, rather than relaxation or idyllic repose, highly productive ritual architectural events are more liable to be occasions of jolting surprise, experimentation, and vicarious participation in frighteningly unfamiliar ways of knowing and being... Productive ritual-architectural events, then, have the character of a rite of passage insofar as they are on occasions that leave both the human and built participants different, either in small or profound ways, than they have been before.<sup>20</sup>

By the late 1960s, Central Congregational Church engaged in ritual-architectural events that aimed to re-present style and theological aesthetics. For Central Congregational Church, these ritual events took on various forms spanning the theological to the socio-political in emphasis, in order to establish a spiritual headquarters for an African-influenced expression of Christianity. Across the Rev. Albert Cleage's sermons and the activities hosted in the sacred space, the site and congregation conveyed this spiritual and material transformation. Chapter five will examine the material and iconographic aspects of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1's legacy of Black Nationalist ritual-architectural events. By the 1970s, the Colonial Revival structure stood as a testament to the cultural revolution and philosophical shifts Black Nationalism, Black Liberation Theology and the Black Arts Movements promoted.

This chapter aims to chart the spatial history of this congregation with a specific interest in how the sacred space emerged as a community headquarters. As this case study will demonstrate, the history of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 represents an under-documented

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<sup>20</sup> Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 54-55.

legacy in African American cultural expression and architectural traditions. Like many congregations across the United States of America, Central Congregational Church purchased an older structure and worked to maintain and modify the structure to meet their specific needs as a community and, later, national headquarters. This chapter will begin by briefly outlining the history of the congregation that would come to be known as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. This study will move to examine the site history of the original Brewster-Pilgrim Church (formerly Pilgrim Church) and offer a formal analysis of the 1925 Colonial Revival structure.<sup>21</sup> The chapter will proceed to consider Detroit as an ideal intellectual environment for the alternative perspectives of Black Nationalism and Marxism.

The majority of this case study will interrogate the politics of place. The Shrine of the Black Madonna was at the forefront in contesting the exclusionary effects of the Detroit Urban Renewal campaign of the 1960s and 1970s. This study will chronicle the congregation's activist role, the alliances Central Congregational Church formed as well as how religious rituals that were forged in that sacred space contributed to the significance of the site. The sequence of sacred and secular occasions culminated in the dedication of this space to the service of Black Nationalist thought and cultural expression. This chapter will conclude by considering instances of the design strategy of redefinition at the core of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as they became a signature feature of Shrine churches across the United States.

### Developing the Black Nation

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is the product of a congregation consistently refining their commitment to the African American community and theological beliefs.

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<sup>21</sup> Between the late 1940s and the 1950s, Pilgrim Church merged with another congregation in their local denominational network, Brewster Church. Although the cornerstone of the structure bears the name Pilgrim Church, this church was commonly referred to as Brewster-Pilgrims by the 1950s.

Throughout the 1950s, the Rev. Cleage developed a Christian ministry concerned with improving the socio-political engagement of the African American church.<sup>22</sup> The Rev. Cleage's relationship with this congregation began in 1951, with his appointment to St. Mark's United Presbyterian Church.<sup>23</sup> As the Rev. Cleage delivered politically rousing sermons and led the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) membership drives at the church, the pastor experienced resistance from the governing Presbytery and congregation's conservative members.<sup>24</sup> In 1953, between 250 and 300 members from St. Mark's congregation and the Rev. Cleage withdrew to create a religious community committed to socio-political engagement and alleviating the social ills of their surrounding community.<sup>25</sup>

Nine days after the withdrawal, *The Chicago Defender* reported on event under the headline "Church Members Quit in Squabble: Protest Dismissal."<sup>26</sup> The account states that Cleage had been dismissed by the Presbyterian denomination for his "program of cultural and social activities, which, they said interfered with the spiritual functions of the church."<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Dillard, 249. Dillard's scholarship reveals that Cleage's activist interests were evident as early as the late 1940s as a pastor at St. John's Congregational in Springfield, Massachusetts. Dillard notes: "One former congregant remarked Cleage, 'recognized and fought against the system by which whites controlled blacks,' most likely a reference to the reverend's willingness to challenge the Springfield city government's exclusion of Blacks from its new public housing developments and to create new opportunities for Black employment in downtown stores."

<sup>23</sup> "Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>24</sup> Dillard, 250.

<sup>25</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 8a, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. The first official meeting of Central Congregational Church occurred on March 19, 1953 in the auditorium of Northern Recreational Center.

<sup>26</sup> One year after Cleage led member to remove their membership with St. Mark's, the new congregation took the name Central Congregational Church in 1954. With the development of a Black Nationalist orientation, in 1970, Central Congregational Church changed their name to what it is today, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1.

<sup>27</sup> "Church Members Quit in Squabble: Protest Dismissal" *Chicago Defender* (National Edition), 28 Mar 1953, 7, Proquest Historical Newspapers, <<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/docview/492912394?accountid=9676>> (accessed: February 6, 2015).

source went on to discuss supportive members who “protested [that] action by a wholesale resignation.”<sup>28</sup> At its inception, Central Congregational Church, the congregation Cleage established with those that joined him in leaving St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church, was dedicated to serving Detroit’s African American community and improving local, political and economic inequity.

Central Congregational Church established specific aims and affiliations from the aforementioned inaugural meeting. Minutes from the meeting offered this rationale for their ministry:

Having professed our faith in Jesus Christ, and believing in freedom of conscience and the autonomy of the local church...we assert our faith in the basic Congregational principle that a company of Christian People, with Christ in the midst, may form a complete church of Christ, needing no sanction from other ecclesiastical bodies...In taking this action we recognize and acknowledge the friendship and co-operation of the Plymouth Congregational Church of Detroit ...For many of us this moment [initiates a]turning again home and for others it symbolizes the finding of a spiritual home long sought—as pleasing as home because it guarantees the freedom, independence and concern dictated by our Christian conscience.<sup>29</sup>

Central Congregational Church identified with the fundamental tenants of Congregational Christianity such as upholding local church autonomy.<sup>30</sup> In fact, this facet of Congregationalism enabled the development of the black radicalism without prohibitive interference. Furthermore, this religious body established ties with Plymouth Congregational Church the historically African

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” n.d., dates to late 1950s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a. This passage was reproduced in an early historical timeline chronicling the church during the 1950s.

<sup>30</sup> For more information on the history of Congregationalism in the United States, see the following texts: Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick Louis Fagley, *History of American Congregationalism* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1942). Williston Walker, “A History of the Congregational Churches,” Philip Schaff, Henry C. Potter, and Samuel M. Jackson, eds., *The American Church History Series: Consisting of a Series of Denominational Histories Published Under the Auspices of the American Society of Church History* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1893)

American Congregational community in Detroit, as its ministry model and ally. As Angela Dillard posits in her book *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, Plymouth Congregational earned a reputation as a predominantly African American, middle class congregation whose memberships included activists affiliated with the local labor movement as well as civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League.<sup>31</sup>

Plymouth Congregational Church was also the church the Rev. Albert Cleage attended with his family throughout his adolescence, as early as 1917.<sup>32</sup> Cleage was heavily involved in several youth organizations at churches across the city, including serving as leader in the youth ministry at Plymouth Congregational. In fact, the long-time pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, the Rev. Horace A. White influenced Cleage's pursuit of activism.<sup>33</sup> Central Congregational Church history's succinctly asserts its missions: "Since our birth, Central's theme has been to minister to the needs of all our people."<sup>34</sup> The founding and development of Central Congregational during the 1950s represents a pivotal catalytic phase in Cleage's activist trajectory. As Angela Dillard observes, "For the first time, Cleage was given the opportunity to

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<sup>31</sup> Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, 100.

<sup>32</sup> "Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman (Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr), Founder and Holy Patriarch, Shrines of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church, (Biographical Chronology) 2, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 14, 2, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Angela Dillard echoes previous biographical accounts of Cleage's middle class background. Dr. Albert B. Cleage, Sr. was the city of Kalamazoo's earliest African American doctor and went on to found a hospital in Detroit for African American. Dr. Cleage put forth an example of how to mobilize public resources for community improvement. For more information, see Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, 240-241.

<sup>33</sup> Dillard, 22.; "Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a. The Rev. White also wrote letters of support in the church's application for admission into the Congregational Association of Detroit.

<sup>34</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 5.

build a church from the ground up, giving it his own distinctive theological and ideological cast.”<sup>35</sup>

The development of Central Congregational Church must be considered in the context of the history of African American Congregationalists. As the history of historically black colleges such as Howard University illustrates, Congregationalists were among the predominantly white denominations that assisted in the social relief efforts after the Civil War. Congregationalists who were interested in educating African American ministers were instrumental in founding Howard University in 1867. By the twentieth century, Congregationalism gained popularity among upper middle class African American communities.<sup>36</sup> By the last quarter of the twentieth century, Central Congregational Church established the potential for radical expressions of African American religion and philosophy that evolved in black Congregationalist spaces.

Between 1953 and 1957, Central Congregational Church aggressively raised funds to secure a permanent space to accomplish their social and spiritual objectives. One month after the church’s founding, Central Congregational raised \$5,000 for a down payment on a large mansion that would serve as a parsonage and parish house.<sup>37</sup> This edifice was located at 2254 Chicago Boulevard.<sup>38</sup> (Figure 4.2) Nestled in between two homes, the two-story brick exterior elevation

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<sup>35</sup> Dillard, 251.

<sup>36</sup> Lincoln, C. Eric, and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) 124; Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983) 172.

<sup>37</sup> “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a. Virginia Park is located just north of the African American community along the Twelfth Street corridor.

<sup>38</sup> National Office, “Our History,” *Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church: Thirtieth Anniversary* (Detroit; Shrine of the Black Madonna, National Office), 1983, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 29, np, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan; Kristin Cleage, “Dancing to the Juke box,” Finding Eliza Archival Blog Website, <<http://findingeliza.com/archives/tag/youth-fellowship> > (accessed July 31, 2016). Kristin Cleage included a photograph of this structure on her archival blog website. This structure matches the home currently located at that address. This archival post also includes photographs of a functional decorated basement that



balances two halves: a cast-stone entry elevation unit to the right and a double-height, multiple light bay windows to the left. This space served as domestic space for Pastor Cleage and his family as well as a functional meeting space for Central Congregation outside of Sunday worship.

Sunday worship service convened in Crossman School, a public school in the Virginia Park neighborhood of Detroit from 1953 to 1957.<sup>39</sup> The congregation built financial collateral on the parsonage which was factored into budgetary proposals submitted to the Congregational denomination for building project funding.<sup>40</sup> By 1954, both Central Church and Pastor Cleage officially transferred denominational affiliation from the United Presbyterian denomination to the Congregational Church. Central Congregational Church wished to maintain a location close to the African American community along Twelfth Street.<sup>41</sup> During the 1950s, this neighborhood transitioned from predominantly a Jewish to an African American community.<sup>42</sup> Detroit's urban development and highway construction displaced African American communities such as Paradise Valley and Black Bottom. By the 1960s, this Twelfth Street area of Detroit, anchored by black institutions such as Central Congregational, was over 95% non-white.<sup>43</sup>

Church leaders searched for a property to accommodate both the sacred and social aspects of their ministry over the next three years. In June 1954, Cleage proposed the purchase of Westminster Presbyterian Church, at Woodward and Parsons Avenues, as “offering adequate

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was used for church functions. This historical account attests to the importance of site in reconfiguring and redefining African American space and Detroit at large.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8a.

<sup>41</sup> Sergue, 242. The Twelfth Street corridor extended north of Grand Boulevard between Hamilton and Linwood Avenue.

<sup>42</sup> Sergue, 242.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 244.

facilities for the expanding institutional type church program.”<sup>44</sup>(Figure 4.3) This 1881 structure was an expansive property with 40,356 square feet of useable space including a partial basement.<sup>45</sup> Westminster Church was designed by Gordon D. Lloyd (1832-1904), the first architect to be recognized among local practitioners as Detroit’s dean of architecture.<sup>46</sup> Behind the three story “modified English Gothic” façade, Westminster contained an auditorium style sanctuary that seated nine hundred, a chapel, auditorium, gymnasium and “ladies parlor.”<sup>47</sup> The three parcel property was valued at \$481, 256.28.<sup>48</sup> Despite the reduction of Westminster’s price to \$283,200, Central Congregational could not afford this property.<sup>49</sup> Although Central Congregational secured financial assistance from the Church Extension Committee of the Congregational denomination and statement of financial support from Plymouth Congregational Church, the year-long effort to acquire the property failed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>“Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8b. Detroit Public Library Archival holdings identify Westminster Church as being located on Woodward Avenue and Parsons Avenue.

<<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A137282>> (accessed: January 28, 2016)

<sup>45</sup> Joel K. Riley, “Appraisal Report: Westminster Presbyterian Church Property,” 15 Jan 1955, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 7, Folder 5, 10, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>46</sup> Eric J. Hill and John Gallagher, “Timeline of Architects,” AIA Detroit: The America Institute of architects Guide to Detroit Architecture, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003) 340; “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8c. The property was later reassessed to be valued at \$283,000 the following year. Gordon Lloyd was a British born and trained architect who settled in Detroit, Michigan, mid nineteenth century. He specialized in revival architectural styles.

<sup>47</sup> Beata P. Jorgenson, *A Century of Christian Service, Westminster Church*, (Detroit: The Church, 1957) 6, 9-10. This source described the structure as follows: “Patterned after St. Sophia, an ancient Byzantine cathedral of the fourth century, the auditorium seated approximately nine hundred. Red plush draperies made a ‘splendid background’ for the three oaken chairs which stood on the platform. There was no pulpit...”

<sup>48</sup> “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8c.

<sup>49</sup> “Chronological Sketch: Central Congregational Church—Detroit Michigan,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, 8c.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

In June 1957, Central Congregational purchased Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church, a more modest structure about two miles southeast of Westminster Church.<sup>51</sup> With the assistance of the local Detroit Congregational Association and Congregational Church Extension Committee, Central Congregational Church was able to secure the purchase of the church located at Linwood and Hogarth for \$174,707.69.<sup>52</sup> During the year the property was purchased, the congregation doubled their fundraising efforts, peaking at \$14,114.66.<sup>53</sup> Despite being hampered by church repairs within two years of the acquisition, by the late 1960s, this religious community was anxious to pay off the remaining debt on the property in order to advance expansion efforts in the following years.<sup>54</sup>

### **Politics of Place: Considering the site history of Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church**

Central Congregational Church mobilized funds to purchase a space that would accommodate their social improvement ministries. Church leadership and the laypersons understood the significance of the site as the church expressed a commitment to being rooted within the African American community. As African American families moved into the neighborhood surrounding the Twelfth Street corridor during the 1950s, black businesses and institutions such as Central Congregational Church established this neighborhood as a cultural

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<sup>51</sup> Pilgrim Congregational Church merged with Brewster Congregational Church in the mid twentieth century.

<sup>52</sup> "Summary of Capital Accounts, Obligations and Payments between Central Church, the Association, the Building Society and Pilgrim Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 6, 15, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Central Congregational paid \$10,000 for a down payment and a subsequent installment about a year after the initial purchase. The congregation received \$105,000 in loans and grants from the Congregational denomination.

<sup>53</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 6, 30, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>54</sup> "1967 Annual Reports for the Fifteenth Annual Meeting," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 26, 2, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

hub.<sup>55</sup> In an undated letter possibly penned in late 1956 or during the first half of 1957, Central Congregational's Relocation Committee Chairman, William H. Boone, outlines the circumstances for the pastor of Pilgrim Church, now renamed Pilgrim-Brewster Congregational Church:

As you know, the Central Congregational Church is seeking to permanently locate in the community now served by the Brewster-Pilgrim. Our efforts to purchase a properly located building suitable for the kind of community program in which we are engaged has been frustrated upon every hand by the scarcity of available buildings and by the growing tendency of the major denominations to meet the problem of a changing community with an inclusive membership policy. It now appears that we will either have to build or locate outside of the community in which we have our roots and for which our programs has been designed. As this possibility has become increasingly apparent following our inability to purchase the old Westminster Church Building, our members have insisted that we approach the officer of the Brewster-Pilgrim Church regarding the possibility of effecting a merger. A sizable number of families have suggested that they will individually transfer their membership to Brewster-Pilgrim if it becomes necessary for Central to locate outside of the community.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the frantic tone of the letter to Brewster-Pilgrim Church's pastor, their plight did not necessitate drastic measures such as merging. Instead, Central Congregational, supported by the local and national Congregational associations, established a purchase agreement for Brewster-Pilgrim Congregational Church.<sup>57</sup>

The structure Central Congregational purchased was erected in 1925 by Pilgrim Congregational Church, a predominantly white religious community.<sup>58</sup> On November 28, 1922, the *Detroit Free Press* outlined the preliminary building plans and a fundraising goal of \$50,000 toward construction by Pilgrim Church. The new edifice was described as follows: "The new

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<sup>55</sup> Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012) 121. It should be noted that the Twelfth Street Corridor was also the site of the 1967 Detroit Riots. Historians have emphasized the fact that Black Nationalist spaces such as Central Congregational Church were not damaged during the riots.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from William H. Boone to the Rev. Paul H. Clark, undated. the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 7, Folder 5, 10, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>57</sup> "Summary of Capital Accounts, Obligations and Payments between Central Church, the Association, the Building Society and Pilgrim Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 6, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from William H. Boone to the Rev. Paul H. Clark, undated. the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 7, Folder 5, 10.

structure, which will be built in the Colonial style of architecture, will be situated on a lot adjoining the present building, and will also provide for a church school and social features. The building will have seating capacity for 800.”<sup>59</sup> Although Pilgrim Congregational was a younger church in the Congregational Detroit landscape in comparison to late nineteenth century churches, this religious community set out to affirm their architectural presence by selecting a notable architect to design in a style that became increasingly popular among Protestant denominations during the late nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> This analysis will examine the structure’s architect, George D. Mason (1856-1948), and contextualize the use of the Colonial Revival architectural styles across the Detroit religious landscape.<sup>61</sup>

As a prominent leader in Detroit’s architectural community George D. Mason gained recognition for his design innovation and drawing skills. By the turn of the twentieth century, Mason had accrued thirty years of architectural design experience. He trained under Henry T. Brush in Detroit during the 1870s.<sup>62</sup> Mason travelled to Europe for architectural study twice in his

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<sup>59</sup> “\$34,000 Is Raised by Pilgrim Church: Linwood Avenue Congregation Plans New Building,” *Detroit Free Press*, 28 Nov. 1922, Newspaper Archives, Library of Congress.

<sup>60</sup> First Congregational Church (Detroit, Mich.), *The First Century, First Congregational Church of Detroit, Michigan: Established December 25th, 1844*, Detroit: First Congregational Church, 1945, <<http://books.google.com/books?id=0yziAAAAMAAJ>>(accessed: August 1, 2016); William B. Rhoads, “The Colonial Revival, Vol. I,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1974), 376-377. The first Congregational church in Detroit was organized by thirteen individuals on December 25, 1844.

<sup>61</sup> George D. Mason & Company, *Pilgrim Congregational Church on Linwood Avenue*, photograph, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library Digital Collection, <<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A167557>> (accessed: February 15, 2016). Detroit Public Library, Burton Historical Collection, George D. Mason & Company prepared architectural plans for the church. The handwritten caption on the photograph attributes the structure to the late nineteenth century firm Mason & Rice. By the 1920s, George D. Mason was operating his own firm, George D. Mason & Company. Mason & Company is also listed as creator in the Detroit Public Library’s catalog classification system.

<sup>62</sup> Clarence M. Burton, William Stocking and Jordan K. Miller. *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922, Volume 3*, (Detroit: The S.K Clarke Publishing Company, 1922) 696. <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micounty/BAD1447.0004.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>> (accessed: February 15, 2016).

career; once in 1884 and again in 1911.<sup>63</sup> He founded the Mason & Rice architectural firm in partnership with Zachariah Rice (1855-1929) in 1878.<sup>64</sup> Anchored by Mason's design acumen, Mason & Rice remained a popular option for public, residential and sacred architectural projects. Mason & Rice gained wider visibility by having designs circulated in publications such as *The Inland Architect and News Recorder*. This firm's published projects included Detroit's Young Men's Association Building (1881), Masonic Temple (1896) and Zachariah Rice's residence (1898).<sup>65</sup> Mason & Rice contributed to the design of one of Detroit's most notable nineteenth century structures—The Detroit Opera House (1896).<sup>66</sup> (Figure 4.5) In the final years of Mason and Rice's association, the firm designed a Richardsonian-Romanesque church for First Presbyterian Church in Detroit.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.; "Our Architects Lead the World: George D. Mason Back from Europe , Says Old World Must Learn from America," *Detroit Free Press*, 27 Nov. 1911, Newspaper Archive, Library of Congress.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid; Gregory Piazza, Allan Machielse, and Dan Austin, *A History of Detroit's Palmer Park*, (Charleston: the History Press, 2015). According to Piazza, Zacariah Rice moved to Detroit in the 1860s with his family. After earning his high school degree in 1872, Rice worked Brush and Smith architectural firm under architects, Henry T. Brush and Hugh Smith. The standing historical narratives do not outline Rice's specialized skills or an active career in the twentieth century, beyond supervising architectural projects in Detroit's Palmer Park.

<sup>65</sup> "Old Masonic Temple," *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XL, no.4, Ryerson & Burnham Archival Image Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago, < <http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/9511/rec/24>> (Accessed: February 19, 2016); "Zachariah Rice Residence," *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. XXVII, no. 3 < <http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/9508/rec/11>>(Accessed: February 19, 2016).

<sup>66</sup> *The Detroit Opera after the Fire*, albumen print, 1897, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library Digital Collection < <http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A149543>> (Accessed: February 19, 2016). George D. Mason, the architect attributed with designing Pilgrim-Brewster Congregational Church (after 1957 known as Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1) co-founded Mason and Rice Company. The organization quickly gained acclaim for public architectural designs.

<sup>67</sup> *First Congregational Church, Detroit*, 1889, <<http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/31020/rec/40>.> The firm also designed a Gothic Revival church for Trinity Episcopal Church (Detroit). This productive partnership lasted until the late 1890s.

George D. Mason taught dozens of young aspiring architects across his career including Albert Kahn (1869-1942), later an architect of international reputation.<sup>68</sup> Mason appointed Albert Kahn chief designer for Mason & Rice in 1891.<sup>69</sup> In fact, the two architects collaborated after the dissolution of the architectural firm. Mason and Kahn experimented with reinforced concrete in the design of Palms Apartment House on Jefferson Ave in the Rivertown area of Detroit in 1902.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the pair produced initial plans for Temple Beth-el on Woodward Avenue.<sup>71</sup> (Figure 4.6) Considering Pilgrim Church was erected in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, Albert Kahn may have collaborated with Mason or recommended Mason for the Protestant commission.<sup>72</sup>

Mason worked with ease across architectural styles.<sup>73</sup> His Doric temple design for Jacob and Benjamin Siegel Monument (1908) in Woodmere Cemetery exhibits the demand for

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<sup>68</sup> “Albert Kahn (March 21, 1869 - Dec. 8, 1942),” Historic Detroit, <<http://historicdetroit.org/architect/albert-kahn/>> (accessed: January 28, 2016). Mason was instrumental in refining Kahn’s drafting skills, as Kahn was hire at the age of 15.

<sup>69</sup> Sally Linvill, “Finding aid for Albert Kahn Papers, 1896-2014,” Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-0420?view=text>> (accessed January 18, 2016). Sources also state that Albert Kahn opted to remain at Mason & Rice despite offers from Adler & Sullivan, upon Frank Lloyd Wright’s departure.

<sup>70</sup> Hill and Gallagher, 232.

<sup>71</sup> Sally Linvill, “Finding aid for Albert Kahn Papers, 1896-2014,” Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhlead/umich-bhl-0420?view=text>> (accessed January 18, 2016). In fact, most photographs of the synagogue’s construction credit George D. Mason & Company as creator.

<sup>72</sup> George D. Mason & Company, “Ponchartrain Hotel exterior,” photograph, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, <<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A167320>> (accessed: Feb 15, 2016).; “Freer Pays Tribute: ‘Standford White Was America’s Greatest Architect,’” *Detroit Free Press*, 27 Jun 1906, Newspaper Archive, Library of Congress. Mason employed McKim, Mead & White as consulting architects on the hotel design. George D. Mason continued to secure substantial commissions throughout the early twentieth century such as the Pontchartrain Hotel and numerous ecclesiastical structures.

<sup>73</sup> In 1903, he secured prominent commissions including the Century Club and the Berry Brothers Office. In the designs for the aforementioned buildings, Mason refined the application of Renaissance-inspired design.<sup>73</sup> In addition to emphasizing symmetrical balance and massing, Mason applies similar quoin detailing across several projects such as Berry Brothers Office (1903) and Pilgrim Congregational (1925).

Classical Revival structures.<sup>74</sup> (Figure 4.7) Mason worked independently until 1920, when he founded George D. Mason & Company. In the fall of 1921, his firm received extensive publicity as Mason was named architect of the new Masonic Temple.<sup>75</sup> (Figure 4.8) Recognized as one of the largest Masonic temples in the world, this project was completed in 1926 and established a new standard for modern ritualistic architecture.<sup>76</sup> In 1923, Mason designed two churches in Detroit: the classical revival Third Church of Christ Scientist and the gothic revival Trinity United Methodist Church.

Mason designed a Colonial Revival church that afforded the opportunity for Pilgrim Congregational Church to expand over time.<sup>77</sup> (Figure 4.8) Inspired by the massing and façades of James Gibbs eighteenth century designs, Pilgrim Congregational Church was originally built as a freestanding sanctuary with the temple-front portico, tower and cupola.<sup>78</sup> (Figure 4.10) This

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<sup>74</sup> George D. Mason & Company, *Siegel mausoleum at Woodmere Cemetery*, 1908, photograph, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

<<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A167934>>(accessed: Feb 15, 2016).; “Factory Modern in All Details: New Plant of Fisher Work,” *Detroit Free Press*, 5 Sept 1915, D9, Newspaper Archive, Library of Congress.

<sup>75</sup> George D. Mason, *Building committee for new Masonic Temple*, 10 Oct 1921, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

<<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A167439>>(accessed: January 23, 2016). In 1923, Mason also witnessed the completion of his design for the Detroit Yacht Club.

<sup>76</sup>Hill and Gallagher, 126. Alex Lundberg, and Greg Kowalski, *Detroit's Masonic Temple*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006) 7-8. Detroit's 1926 Masonic Temple remains one of the largest Masonic temple in the world. The design featured three main components of a ritual building, a shrine club and auditorium building with public facilities. The Neo-Gothic fourteen story structure houses more than one thousand rooms including seven lodge rooms, two theaters, two ballrooms, an industrial kitchen, expansive office space as well as multiple dining halls. The Masonic Hall was never completed as an additional theater in the tower, a gymnasium with a pool and shower facilities remain unused and unfinished. Lundberg and Kowalski note that the building was designed “in the shape of a giant level, a Masonic symbol of equality.” Lundberg and Kowalski include a cross-section of the east and west elevation in their text on page 61.

<sup>77</sup> By the 1950s, Pilgrim Church funded the construction of an auxiliary wing. Mason's design was extended by adding a corridor parallel to the entry bay. The addition is a two-story, flat roof structure that runs the length of the original structure.

<sup>78</sup> Rhoads, xxxviii. **Figure 9** documents the church without the addition in the 1920s. George D. Mason & Company, *Pilgrim Congregational Church on Linwood Avenue*, photograph, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library Digital Collection, <<http://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A167557>> (accessed: February 15, 2016).



configuration bears the influence of James Gibbs's St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London.<sup>79</sup> Gibbs combined the Wrenian Baroque tower with the centralized rectangular plan and monumental portico associated with Andrea Palladio's designs. The octagonal cupola emerges from two brick square bases terminated by white cornices. (Figure 4.11) The upper register features a central white, wooden roundel on each side. The cupola rests directly on an octagonal form, embellished with engaged columns and slender rounded arches.

The rectangular massing of the sanctuary's nave defines Pilgrim Congregational Church. The common bond brick work, consisting of various tones of red brick, establishes rhythm and texture. Each corner of the structure, including the subsequent addition, is framed by quoin masonry detailing. The brick structure includes limestone elements and wood trimming. For instance, four Palladian windows set within rounded arches contrast with the simple line of the long sanctuary walls. The white wooden window pane tracery emphasizes the limestone rounded arches. (Figure 4.12) This reinforces the material and visual variety and contrast. The two doors located on the Hogarth avenue side are encased with classicized scroll brackets and cornices. (Figure 4.13) The sanctuary façade is anchored by a portico with four Tuscan columns. Nine steps ascend to a set of doors centered below three rectangular windows. The portico is illuminated by a set of inset lighting fixtures and a large hanging cast iron and glass lantern. The gabled roof and portico are united through the use of dentil bands, which amplify the dimensionality of the façade.

Beyond the portico entry way, a shallow foyer grants access to the main floor of the sanctuary and the choir loft at the rear of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a long well-lit

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<sup>79</sup> Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 77, 90. In the case of St. Martin-in-the-Field, Gibbs combines Wren's composite Classical Baroque towers with Palladio's centralized rectangular plan. This plan was republished in Gibbs's *A Book of Architecture* (1728) and influenced building practices in the American colony.

rectangular space facing the chancel flanked by the lectern and pulpit.<sup>80</sup> Against the red carpeted space, two ranks of pews and three aisles fill the nave. The chancel is situated atop a set of four steps. A lectern and pulpit are situated on the steps, mediating the space between the congregation and altar. The chancel narrows in width toward the terminating wall. Prior to Central Congregational's purchase, the chancel contained a monumental stained glass portrait window of colonial governor William Bradford.<sup>81</sup> This chancel is framed by a pair of white engaged columns with fluting that reinforces the vertical thrust of the space.<sup>82</sup>

The rear of the chancel is divided into two areas. The left side contained four rows of choir seating. The opposing section had two rows and area for a small organ. This space is unified and encased by a white wooden parapet wall, with a lacquered wooden railing. Additional seating is provided for ministers facing the congregation in a set of chairs situated in front of the choir stalls. After the 1970s, the church made additional adjustments to the rear chancel including the

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<sup>80</sup> Unidentified photographer, *Untitled (Cleage at pulpit)*, undated, pre-1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 12, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. This photograph documents the sanctuary during the 1960s before the installation of Glanton Dowdell's mural and the large liturgical altar.

<sup>81</sup> William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1645), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); George F. Willison, *The Pilgrim Reader; The Story of the Pilgrims As Told by Themselves & Their Contemporaries, Friendly & Unfriendly*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953. William Bradford (1590-1657) was a member of the separatist group that left England and moved to Holland in 1608. In 1620, this group immigrated to the North America with the Pilgrims. In addition to being an initial signer of the Mayflower Compact, Bradford served as governor of Plymouth Colony for over thirty years. The Congregational Church was one of the established church in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This religious tradition was carried to Midwestern communities by pioneer settlers. Bradford's dedication and leadership in the development of Plymouth Colony made him an ideal Pilgrim icon for twentieth century Congregational churches who aimed to visualize the associative links to an American colonial past.

<sup>82</sup> Unidentified photographer, *Untitled (Cleage and men in chancel)*, undated, after May 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr., Papers, Box 12, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. The Colonial Revival components like engaged columns are repeats throughout the interior of the sanctuary.

installation of a large altar.<sup>83</sup> The large sanctuary is united with a detailed cornice that repeats the dentil motif.

The additional structure that runs parallel to the rectangular nave was erected on the lot adjacent to the original 1925 structure. (Figure 4.16) Local archival sources do not indicate the year of construction. Considering the condition of the wing at the time of the 1957 purchase, the addition probably was erected during the 1930s.<sup>84</sup> The auxiliary structure is crowned with a classical balustrade in an effort to establish stylistic harmony and to further the incorporation of classical revival elements. The sanctuary and recreational building are linked by a small passageway that has its own entryway from the exterior thus allowing restricted access to the sanctuary. The transition between spaces is articulated on the exterior through a reduction of vertical emphasis. The exterior egress is articulated with the white door.

The auxiliary space is a design adaptation to accommodate social activities and ministerial outreach efforts popularized by the Social Gospel movement of the early twentieth century. The Social Gospel religious movement of the early twentieth century promoted a form of “Christianity applied to people’s social circumstances and conditions.”<sup>85</sup> The Social Gospel

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<sup>83</sup> The decorative modifications made to the chancel in the second half of the twentieth century will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>84</sup> This project reflects Pilgrim Congregational Church’s evolving modern demands for functional space as opposed to liturgical space resulted in the inclusion of a complimentary wing. This auxiliary wing fulfilled the church’s initial request for sacred and social space.

<sup>85</sup> Genna Rae McNeil, *Witness: Two Hundred Years of African-American Faith and Practice at the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem*, (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013) 43. For more information on the Social Gospel Movement see the following texts: Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: the Social Gospel and Modern American Culture*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Inaugural Social Gospel Conference and Christopher Hodge Evans, *Perspectives on the Social Gospel: Papers from the Inaugural Social Gospel Conference at Colgate Rochester Divinity School* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).; Ronald C. White and Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).; Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition. W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

movement set out to alleviate the ramifications of industrial development and urbanization.<sup>86</sup> This wing housed church and pastoral offices, a fellowship hall, nursery and kitchen replete with skylight. Both the sanctuary and auxiliary wings served as functional community space upon the congregation's purchase of the property in the 1957.

Mason's use of the Colonial Revival for Pilgrim Congregational is indicative of the popularity of this style for ecclesiastical design from the nineteenth century through to the 1920s.<sup>87</sup> William Rhodes's study of Colonial Revival architecture outlines how the style was regarded by the nation's leading architects. Rhodes demonstrates how a considerable number of Congregational Churches adopted the Colonial Revival architectural style. This stylistic recurrence resulted in pattern of architectural components that were formally linked with the colonial meetinghouse. The Colonial Revival church came to be defined by a spire with domed elements, an imposing portico and an interior gallery design attributed to Asher Benjamin.<sup>88</sup> Colonial Revival architectural vocabularies were promoted for their economic efficiency; and intrinsically patriotic, American character.<sup>89</sup> The Colonial Revival style affirmed a religious body's inclusion in the American Protestant landscape and communicated associative references to American patriotic sentiments.

By the turn of the century, Congregational churches looking to erect a place of worship had a body of ecclesiastical manuals, pattern books and journals to inform local architectural

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<sup>86</sup> Milton C. Sernett, *Afro-American Religious History: a Documentary Witness, Second Edition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).; Erin McKenna and Scott L. Pratt, "Labor, empire and the social gospel : Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Jane Addams," *American Philosophy: From Wounded Knee to the Present* (London: Bloombury Academic, 2015). One of the African American advocates of the Social Gospel movement is the A.M.E. minister, Rev. Reverdy C. Ransom. He published several essays on the Social Gospel such as "The Race Problem in a Christian State, 1906."

<sup>87</sup> Rhoads, 200. In this study, Rhoads extensively traces the popularity of Colonial Revival architecture.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 211-212.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 215-216.

decisions.<sup>90</sup> Brian Zugay's 2004 dissertation examines the relationship between published architectural manuals and church construction by leading Protestant denominations including the Congregationalists.<sup>91</sup> In 1853, the Congregational denomination published *Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages* which recommended a range of architectural styles including variations on Gothic and Greek styles to Romanesque elements.<sup>92</sup> Zugay describes Congregational architectural patterns containing a centralized pulpit plan with a tower or bell-cote.<sup>93</sup> Additional frequently used architectural elements include rounded arch windows, horizontal cornices and "an emphasis on wall surface."<sup>94</sup> Pilgrim Congregational Church reveals both an adherence to elements central to the aforementioned description and design interventions that facilitate the social functional facets of Protestant twentieth century American congregations.

Congregationalism and Colonial Revival architecture are associated with Colonial New England settlers. Gretchen Townsend Buggein's book, *Temples of Grace: the Material Transformation of Connecticut's Church, 1790-1840* rigorously illustrates the indelible

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 203. William Rhoads also emphasizes the ways in which the style accommodates liturgical necessities. Rhoads described the relationship between the ritualistic use of the space and style with these words: "the spire from the United Church in New Haven of 1815, the spire's domical ending from Bulfinch's Lancaster (Massachusetts) Church of 1816 and the interior gallery from Asher Benjamin's West Church in Boston of 1806. Even the massive portico with its eight conspicuously expensive columns was thought to be in the spirit of the best early meeting houses... It is just this monumentality—along with the rejection wood for brick, stone and iron—which places this Colonial Revival church in the Beaux-Arts—that dominated early years of the twentieth century.

Small, square, low with a single broad gallery nearly at the level of the pulpit, with an abundance of light, and with all spaces unobstructed, they met the conditions of a simple Congregational service... The 'touch of grace' meant that the European historical styles would be called upon to dress up the barren Colonial shell." With these words, Rhoads aptly characterizes Pilgrim Congregational Church.

<sup>91</sup> Brian Christopher Zugay, *Towards a "New Era" in Church Building: Architectural Reform in American Protestantism in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries*, (diss., Brown University, 2004) 32.

Although Congregational churches functioned autonomously, by the mid-nineteenth century the denomination set out to centralize church architecture under the auspices of a Church Extension organization later named the American Congregational Union.

<sup>92</sup> Zugay, 75, 79. Zugay also notes *Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages* is the first American plan or pattern book dedicated to the architecture of a "non-ritualistic denomination."

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Zugay, 84. *The Book of Plans* also discourages the use of basement room as they did not adhere to commodious, well-ventilated healthy spaces.

architectural impact of Congregationalism on New England and the American landscape.<sup>95</sup> In the Midwest, the style was employed in order to establish community and to serve as “a cultural extension of Old England,” according to Peter W. Williams.<sup>96</sup> Echoing the denominational narrative, a Michigan Congregationalist Church history situates the evolution of the denomination with the expansion of American frontiers. One church historian offered this account:

[Congregational history] portrays the efforts of a heroic band of pioneers to keep alive the flame of religious faith which they brought with them in full measure. Some of these settlers came to Michigan because of wanderlust, a characteristic of many American people; some came because the government gave them a quarter section of land in payment for service in the War of 1812; the panic of 1837 drives others to this poorly mapped territory.<sup>97</sup>

Pilgrim Congregational Church, founded about 1902 and later renamed Pilgrim-Brewster Church, furthered the denominational efforts to commemorate vestiges of the colonial founders.<sup>98</sup> In addition to adopting Colonial Revival architectural programs, Pilgrim Church advanced their associative efforts by anchoring the sanctuary with a stained-glass image of William Bradford, a Pilgrim icon of colonial civic virtue and religious leadership.<sup>99</sup> In this way, patriotic expressions were woven throughout the material fabric of the edifice as well as religious paradigms.

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<sup>95</sup> Gretchen T. Buggein, *Temples of Grace: The Material Transformation of Connecticut's Churches, 1790-1840*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), iv, 73-75.; Gretchen T. Buggein, “Elegance and Sensibility in the Calvinist Tradition: The First Congregational Church of Hartford, Connecticut,” *Seeing beyond the Word: Visual arts and the Calvinist Tradition*, Paul C. Finney, ed, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 429-456.

<sup>96</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter W. Williams, “‘The Heart of it all’: Varieties of Ohio’s Religious Architecture,” *Houses of God: Region, Religion & Architecture in the United States*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 76.

<sup>97</sup> W.H. Kinsey and F.A. Baldwin, “The Early Years of Park Church, 1836,” *Park Congregational Church: the story of One Hundred Years, 1836-1936*, (Grand Rapids: Park [First] Congregational Church, 1936) 1.

<sup>98</sup> Pilgrim Congregational Church (Detroit, Mich.). *Pilgrim Church Record Book, 1902-1913*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society, 1981.

<sup>99</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of “Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 4, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

Detroit offered a variety of Protestant architectural examples of religious structures to inform selection of the Colonial Revival style. First Congregational Church erected a Classical Revival church in 1854 that was anchored by the repetition of the rounded arch derived from the 1853 *Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages*. (Figure 4.17) In addition to the Renaissance-inspired design, First Congregational Church featured dentil band detailing and a truncated tower to emphasize the entry bay.<sup>100</sup> Public architecture projects in the 1920s such as Cass Gilbert's Renaissance Revival Detroit Public Library (1921) also provided stylistic elements that could have informed Pilgrim Congregational's design. Colonial Revival architecture took on new significance and meaning in the case of Central Congregational when Cleage and his parishioners invested the structure with theological and aesthetic facets of Black Liberation Theology and Black Nationalism. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 presents a rare instance where Colonial Revival architectural styles express Black Nationalism. For this religious community, the revisionist aesthetics and life of the space contested the associative relationship of Colonial Revival architecture and American patriotic ideas. In this way, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 represents an intervention in style and identity that contests a conflated notion of American identity and practices of oppression.

Central Congregational Church was able to purchase Pilgrim Congregational Church through funding, as well as loans and grants from the local and national offices of the Congregational denomination. In the four years prior to the acquisition, Central Congregational Church members fundraised \$16,204, partly through social activities such as dances and

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<sup>100</sup> Religious communities such as Congregational Unitarian Church (later renamed First Unitarian Church) erected churches that provided classical precedents young architects. Congregational Unitarian Church was a Greek Revival church replete with Ionic columns, pediment and balustrade. This structure was still standing, repurposed as a recreation center, in 1921 and could have influenced Classical and Colonial Revival design.

picnics.<sup>101</sup> The church encouraged weekly donations to the Building Fund through pledge cards from 1953 to 1960.<sup>102</sup> Members also organized an annual bazaar which brought together local African American artists, designers and a variety of businesses.<sup>103</sup> The image of the structure was incorporated into fundraising advertisements for the church.<sup>104</sup> The 1953 purchase of a parsonage and the 1957 acquisition of the Colonial Revival church complex initiated a pattern of real estate ventures this religious community would explore through the late twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> The Building Fund Committee continued steering efforts to pay off standing debt on the structure and secure other properties for the developing community.<sup>106</sup>

When Central Congregational Church obtained ownership of Brewster-Pilgrim Church, the structure was thirty-two years old. By 1959, only one year after making the second \$10,000

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<sup>101</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 30, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>102</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 30; "Keep Your Pledge Paid Up Flyer Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 14. Pledge Card: Congregational Church, March 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. This pledge card was a part of a fundraising strategy aimed at financing church repairs and mortgage payments. The card included the parishioner's address, contact information, family demographics and a comparative chart documenting old financial pledges against newly promised goals. In 1955, the church stimulated giving in a Buy-a-Brick campaign.

<sup>103</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 30; Building Fund Committee Advertisement, 1960, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. This advertisement records the schedule of fundraising events that often brought entertainment and safe programming to the surrounding community. These events include a Building-Fund Raffle, Carnival & Bazaar, Fall Rummage Sale and Area Groups Projects. The flyer offers this rationale for fundraising: "We must raise \$5,000 from projects...to meet our budget allowance for building repairs."

<sup>104</sup> Building Fund Committee Advertisement, 1959, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. The upper left corner of this flyer shows the use of the church's image in promoting fiscal obligations to members.

<sup>105</sup> "1966 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 24, 106, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Church reports from 1966 and 1967 reveal that area groups (the membership of the church is broken down into areas groups) were still actively contributing amounts between \$100 and \$500 to the Building Fund.

<sup>106</sup> "Special Building Fund Committee—1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 28, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.



installment of the down payment, the structure was in need of major repair.<sup>107</sup> From the late 1950s to the late 1960s, church maintenance was managed by the church's House Committee. In 1967, two lay members initiated the Emergency Building Repair Committee.<sup>108</sup> This body was responsible for fundraising and overseeing the repairs of the aging structure.<sup>109</sup> By implementing a strategic approach to fundraising, the committee was able to replace the flat roof on the auxiliary wing and replace the skylight in the kitchen.<sup>110</sup> The committee set out to replace the sanctuary roof, complete exterior painting and make plumbing repairs.<sup>111</sup> Central Congregational Church was not hindered by the fiscal obligations to maintain their religious home. Through the 1960s and 1970s, Central Congregational made a series of modifications to their space and invested in new properties to redefine their sense of place in Detroit.

### **Detroit as Catalyst for Activist Mobilization**

Throughout much of the twentieth century, Detroit was known as America's "arsenal of democracy."<sup>112</sup> Often celebrated as the nation's industrial jewel, by the mid-twentieth century, Detroit emerged as center stage for major protest movements that confronted the economic

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<sup>107</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 30. Although the records did not indicate what work was completed, this project totaled about \$6,000.

<sup>108</sup> "Emergency Building Repair Fund, 1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 39, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>109</sup> Charles C. Smith and Fred Paramore, "Central Congregational Church—Building Fund Receipts, 1953-1961," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 4, 30.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. The committees collected \$2,425.94 from 1966 to 1967, which enabled them to complete roofing projects and repair the kitchen.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas J. Sugrue, "Introduction," *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). The author opens the text by referring to 1940s Detroit as the "arsenal of democracy," because of its reputation for high-wage blue collar job opportunities and population influx. Sugrue suggests this laid the foundation for urban crisis, seen in cities across the United States. Sugrue asserts, "Detroit's postwar crisis emerged as the consequence of two of the most important, interrelated, and unresolved problems in American history: that capitalism generates economic inequality and that African Americans have disproportionately borne the impact of that inequality."

inequalities intrinsic to American capitalism. Historian Thomas J. Sugrue characterizes the condition that demanded activist mobilization as follows:

Detroit's postwar urban crisis emerged as the consequence of two of the most important, interrelated and unresolved problems in American history: that capitalism generates economic inequality and that African Americans have disproportionately borne the impact of that inequality...Detroit's racial and economic crisis emerged in a particular context—mid-twentieth-century America. Shifts at the national level in economics, race relations and politics interacted with local forces to cause the urban crisis.<sup>113</sup>

As a symbolic industrial capital, Detroit simultaneously cultivated a strong community of Marxist activists and of labor organizations to counter patterns of economic oppression. Detroit was defined by class and racial tensions that adversely affected the living conditions, education and employment of African Americans

During the 1950s and 1960s, Detroit was home to the nation's fourth largest urban population of African Americans.<sup>114</sup> After the 1950s, new labor organizations attracted African American membership by promoting radical, comprehensive social reform. The United Automobile Workers Union promoted civil rights rhetoric but maintained a "shallow commitment" to such interests.<sup>115</sup> By the 1960s, the African American community experienced success in electing African American representatives to the Detroit city council, Michigan Senate and House of Representative.<sup>116</sup> Despite the appearance of political gains, African American leaders such as the Rev. Albert Cleage continued to explore Marxist critiques of American

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas J. Sugrue, "Introduction," *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Julius Eric Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1999) 21. Studies such as August Meier and Elliot Rudwick's *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* demonstrate the integral role African Americans played in Detroit's labor movement throughout the twentieth century.

<sup>115</sup> Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, "Preface to the Third Edition (2012)," *Detroit I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012) xvi.

<sup>116</sup> Thompson, 22.

industrial and economic structures. In fact, Cleage and his peers subsequently solidified links between Detroit's Marxist community and Black Nationalist development.

In the 1960s, Detroit activists such as James Boggs (1919-1993), an ally of the Rev. Cleage, began to protest and publish against American Capitalism.<sup>117</sup> Boggs shaped the critical environment in which the Shrine of the Black Madonna developed with publications like the 1963 book, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook*, alongside subsequent essays such as "The City Is the Black Man's Land," and "The Myth and Irrationality of Black Capitalism."<sup>118</sup> In a *Liberator Magazine* essay published the same month as the unveiling of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural, Boggs concisely described Detroit's iteration of Black power with these words:

Today the concept of Black Power expresses the new revolutionary social force of the black population concentrated in the black belt of the South and in the urban ghettos of the North—a revolutionary social force that must struggle not only against the capitalists but against the workers and middle classes who benefit from and support the system that has oppressed and exploited blacks... Thus, black political power, coming at this juncture in the economically advanced United States, is the key not only to black liberation but to the introduction of a new society to emancipate economically the masses of the people in general.<sup>119</sup>

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 was a community meeting point where activists including Boggs, H. Rapp Brown and Amiri Baraka would promote a notion of black liberation that

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<sup>117</sup> James Boggs was an African American labor and civil rights activist. During the 1960s, Boggs led protests as a worker at a local Detroit automotive factory. He would play an integral role in the Marxist organization led by C.L. James, the Correspondence Publishing Community. He would go on to publish a range of essays and books that reflected his philosophical development from Marxism to black liberation thought.

<sup>118</sup> James Boggs and Stephen M. Ward, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> Boggs, "Black Power: A Scientific Concept Whose Time Has Come," in James Boggs and Stephen M. Ward, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011) 176-177.

focused on the intersection of political, social and economic inequality.<sup>120</sup> From the earliest public utterances of the phrase, black power represented the potential for a cultural and sociopolitical revolution. It is important to emphasize that the existence of this discourse in the African American press predates the myriad of black power definitions published in mainstream outlets during the late 1960s.<sup>121</sup>

As early as 1970, only four years after Stokley Carmichael's public cry for Black Power, John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier and Elliot Rudwick edited a volume of primary documents that presented a historiography of Black Nationalism extending back to the eighteenth century. This publication was one of the earliest texts that defined Black Nationalism in relationship to black power movement of the 1960s. The authors define black nationalism as a term employed "...to describe a body of social thought, attitudes, and actions ranging from the simplest expressions of ethnocentrism and racial solidarity to the comprehensive and sophisticated ideologies of Pan-

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<sup>120</sup> Woodard, "Amiri Baraka and the Music of Life," *Transition* 114 (2014): 2-12; Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006) xvii, 186-88); L. Eldridge Cleaver, "Black is Back!(1962)" *Black Nationalism in America*, Bracey, Meier and Rudwick, eds. (New York: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970) 445. In a 1962 essay published in *The Negro History Bulletin*, L. Eldridge Cleaver affirmed, "Black is Coming Black! The rebirth of Africa, black dignity and black power, is destined to raise the black end of the yardstick from the depths to which it was crushed by the oppressive weight of the doctrine of 'White Supremacy'—raise it back into proper equilibrium." The development of Black Power as espoused by Stokley Carmichael in 1966 was a continuation of longstanding tradition of Black Nationalism. Amiri Baraka (1934-2014), formerly LeRoi Jones, was a cultural critic, poet and playwright who led the Black Arts Movement in New York, San Francisco and finally New Jersey. After spending time with the Beat poets during the 1950s, by the mid-1960s Baraka pursued radical politics. This was prompted by his time with Malcolm X and leader of the 1964 Zanibar Revolution, Abdul Rahman Babu. He founded Black Arts Repertory Theatre School (BARTS) where classed on music, theater, dance and visual arts were conducted. Musician Sun-Ra and actor Lou Gosset were instructors at BARTS. H. Rap Brown (1943- ) is a author and activist who gained notoriety as Stokely Carmichael's predecessor as chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He was a powerful orator that became a black nationalism advocate, promoting armed resistance.

<sup>121</sup> Edward B. Fiske, "Black Power in the Pulpit," *The New York Times*, 12 Nov 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan; "'Black power'---How Powerful?: A Monitor Survey," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 Jul 1966, pg.1.

Negroism or Pan-Africanism.”<sup>122</sup> The author goes on to identify the key issues that connect and distinguish the 1960s Black Power phase of Black Nationalism:

In terms of ideology, rhetoric, and programs, most features of the black nationalism of the 1960s have been seen before: cultural nationalism, territorial separatism, emigrationism, religious nationalism, economic nationalism and revolutionary nationalism. What appears to be distinctive about the current trend is the depth and intensity of black nationalist feeling; the widespread acceptance of black consciousness, at least at the rhetorical level, among all classes of Afro-America; the willingness of the nation’s business and government leaders to recognize some varieties of militant black separatism and black power as a legitimate and respectable ideology; the sharing of ideologies with independent African nations; the tendency of some blacks to reject completely the legitimacy of American values and institutions; and the widespread advocacy of armed self-resistance and retaliation.<sup>123</sup>

This volume credits Cleage, alongside Elijah Muhammad, leader of the African American Nation of Islam, as strengthening religious nationalism. The Rev. Cleage is lauded for his publications and for commissioning a “wall filling portrait of a black Madonna and Child in the tradition of Garvey’s African Orthodox Church.”<sup>124</sup> Cleage consistently confirmed this association in his public speeches and his writing.<sup>125</sup> Through sermon, essay and art, the religious community of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 represented political, religious and cultural revision at the core of Black Nationalism.

This tradition of local activism engaging national issues suggests that the efforts of the Rev. Albert Cleage and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 demonstrates a continuation of a

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<sup>122</sup> Bracey, Meier and Rudwick, eds. “Introduction,” *Black Nationalism in America*, xxvi.

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

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, li.

<sup>125</sup> Cleage, “Introduction,” *Black Messiah*, 8. Cleage states, “The only black leader in this country to meet this problem head-on was Marcus Garvey, who organized the African Orthodox Church with a black hierarchy, including a Black God, a Black Jesus, a Black Madonna and black angels. Forty years ago black Americans apparently were not ready for Garvey’s religious ideas, although to this day, in every major city, individual Garveyites continue to circulate portraits of a Black Jesus. In Africa, however, Garvey’s religious ideas played a key role in founding the African Independent Churches which in many countries acted as the center of the liberation movement.” For more information on the relationship between the philosophies of Garvey and Cleage see: Aswad Walker, “Princes Shall Come out of Egypt : A Theological Comparison of Marcus Garvey and Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr.,” *Journal of Black Studies* 39: 194-251.

protest tradition that aimed to alleviate urban blight in order to improve African American environments.<sup>126</sup> Historian Angela Dillard documents Cleage’s leadership role across labor and civil rights organizations in her book, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*. She asserts, “With Cleage and his constituency, which included an array of Black nationalists and separatists, as well as Black and white Marxists, the city’s civil rights movement may be said to have entered a new phase—one marked by a new, or at least reconstituted, community of protest...”<sup>127</sup> Contributing to grassroots mobilization, he actively collaborated with fellow activists in founding a myriad of organizations. For instance, in 1966, the Rev. Cleage founded the Inner-City Organizing Committee (ICOC) alongside local labor leader James Boggs in Central Congregational Church.<sup>128</sup> This organization set out to systematically address housing and living inequalities and promote cultural activities in African American urban communities.<sup>129</sup> Community-centered activities and political mobilization such as hosting the ICOC established a broader audience for the cultural and artistic shifts housed at the Shrine, #1. This aspect of this religious community’s history advances the assertion of the Shrine of the Black Madonna as an early Black Nationalist site.

Twenty-first century scholarship on the Black Arts Movements provides a more nuanced understanding of the period, allowing for a contextual analysis of the cultural work of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. The leading scholars on the Black Arts Movement artistic production, John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez and James Smethurst, appraises the Black Arts Movement in the 2008 anthology, *SOS—Calling All Black People*. They offer this definition:

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<sup>126</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

<sup>127</sup> Dillard, 21.

<sup>128</sup> Dillard, 292. The founding members of ICOC included Rennie Freeman, Ken Cockrel, and Grace Lee Boggs.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 292-293.

BAM [the Black Arts Movement] encompassed a wide range of ideological and aesthetic stances. Nonetheless, like the Black Power Movement, all strains of BAM were generally united by a belief in the need for personal and social transformation of African Americans to determine their own political and cultural destiny and by a sense that the movement was part of an international struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism and racism...Malcolm and Coltrane came to be seen as the twin pillars of a new outlook and attitude that gained full expression in the Black Arts Movement. Coltrane's dismantling the foundations of western music while simultaneously producing beautiful and moving works outside of its constraints demonstrated that a new world was possible. Malcolm's words made explicit the critique implicit in Coltrane's music: Do you want to integrate a burning house? Do you want human rights or civil rights?<sup>130</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, the Rev. Cleage was influenced by the philosophical development of

Malcolm X. In 1963, both Cleage and Malcolm X participated in Detroit's Grass Roots

Leadership Conference.<sup>131</sup> Cleage referenced Malcolm X often in sermons and even included a

sermon entitled "Brother Malcolm" in his first book, *Black Messiah*.<sup>132</sup> By the 1970s, Amiri

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<sup>130</sup> Bracey, Sanchez and Smethurst, eds. "Editors' Introduction, *SOS—Calling All Black People*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014) 1.; Carter Mathes, "The Sonic Field of Resistance: Free Jazz and the Horizon of Black Aesthetic Expansion," *Imagine the Sound Experimental African American Literature After Civil Rights*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015)23-60; Howard Ramsby, "All Aboard the Malcolm-Coltrane Express," *The Black Arts Enterprise and the Production of African American Poetry*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011)35.; Jamie Howison, *God's Mind in That Music: Theological Exploration Through the Music of John Coltrane* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012).; Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).; Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).; Richard Turner, "John Coltrane: A Biographical Sketch," *The Black Perspective in Music*. 3, no. 1(1975): 3-29. John Coltrane (1926-1967) was a jazz saxophonist and pioneer of Free Jazz. Free Jazz was an experimental form of jazz, referred to anti-jazz by critics, is defined by the dominance of improvisation as opposed to Western composition. John Coltrane would influence Black Art Movement artists as well as Pan-Africanist with performance such the April 23, 1967 performance at Olatunji Center for African Culture in Harlem. Mathes says this of John Coltrane: The sonic dimensions of the Coltrane performance arise from this matrix of blackness, modernist innovation, and historical tradition situated within formations of African American experience and collective memory." Coltrane died months after this performance and Black Arts Movement artists honored him in their art production and canonized him in the Black Arts Movement.

<sup>131</sup> Louis A. DeCaro, *Malcolm and the Cross: The Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Christianity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998).; Robert Terrill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Malcolm X* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Malcolm X (1925-1965) was an African American activist and religious leader who outlined the philosophies and social concerns of Black Nationalism. He evolved from promoting Black Nationalist Separatists perspectives to constructing ideologies to confront global black oppression. Across this body of thought, he urged people maintain a posture of critical engagement with oppressive power structures.

<sup>132</sup> Cleage "Brother Malcolm," *Black Messiah*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968) 200. In this sermon, Cleage asserts, "[Malcolm X] was developing a concept of struggle. Our struggle is a power struggle...Malcolm had defined 'Black Power' when he said that our whole struggle against the white man

Baraka even credits Cleage with advancing black liberation across religious lines.<sup>133</sup> The socially-oriented religious ministry and art of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 sought to confront and deconstruct American Christian theology and African American investment in these religious perspectives in order to correct a history of racial prejudice.

As Detroit gained national prominence as a protest capital, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 emerged as a station that would nurture activism. Black Arts Movement historian James Smethurst described mid 1960s Detroit as an ideal environment for the development of Detroit's Black Arts Movements, noting:

...militant nationalism had a long history in Detroit. Revolutionary and cultural nationalist institutions, such as GOAL [Group on Advanced Leadership], [Edward] Vaughn's Bookstore, UHURU, the LRBW [League of Revolutionary Black Workers], the RNA [Republic of New Afrika], Rev. Albert Cleage Jr.'s Central Congregational (later the Shrine of the Black Madonna), and the NOI [Nation of Islam], played important parts in stimulating and maintaining the Black Arts movement in Detroit.<sup>134</sup>

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 was a nexus in a network of cultural and sociopolitical activism. In the years following the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X, the Shrine of the Black

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as an enemy, is a power struggle. We are not going to solve it if we are powerless. We must get power if we are to participate in a power struggle.”

<sup>133</sup> Marvin X and Faruk, “Islam and Black Art,” *Black Arts: an Anthology of Black Creations*, Ahmed Alhamisi and Harun K. Wangara, eds. (Detroit, Black Arts Publication, 1970) 149.

<sup>134</sup> Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*, 224. Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) was founded in 1962 to address urban racial and social economic. Under the leadership of the Rev. Cleage and brothers, Henry and Milton Mitchell, GOAL became one of Detroit's most active Black Nationalist organization. Edward Vaughn's Bookstore was founded in 1962 and served as a major repository of Black Nationalist literature and periodical. The League of Black Revolutionary Workers was founded after a series of wildcat strike at Dodge Factory on May 2, 1968. LBRW also formed the Dodge Radical Union Movement. LBRW mobilized Detroit's broad activist communities from black nationalist to Marxists. The Republic of New Afrika is a Black Nationalist organization dedicated to establishing an independent state of people of African descent in the southern United States. The RNA was founded by two brothers, Milton and Henry Mitchell. These men were influenced by the teachings of Malcolm X. The Nation of Islam is a Black Nationalist expression of Islam. Although it was founded in the 1930s, by the 1960s Malcolm X and the NOI were at the forefront of promoting Black Nationalist ideologies.



Madonna, #1 sponsored and hosted Black Arts Conventions in 1966 and 1967 that promoted this space and its evolving aesthetic to a broader national audience.<sup>135</sup>

Black Liberation Theology was a movement that consisted of African American preachers and theologians reevaluating the church's relationship to American religious institutions and ideas.<sup>136</sup> The Black Liberation Theology movement was directly informed by the evolving discourse on Black Nationalism. Moving beyond the sociological difference to address doctrine and practice, Black Liberation Theology aimed to critique white supremacist assumptions and histories inherent in American Christianity.<sup>137</sup> Whereas academicians like Dr. James Cone constructed the theological precepts of Black Liberation Theology, the Rev. Albert Cleage was a pioneer in establishing the practical application of Black Liberation Theology.<sup>138</sup> Pastor Cleage shaped the discourse by emphasizing that Christianity emerged from a history of freeing an oppressed black nation; a movement led by a Black Messiah, Jesus Christ. As early as 1973, Gayraud Wilmore acknowledged the early contributions of Cleage by identifying him as one of the black church's "radical theologians" in his definitive study, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*. He maintains:

Intimately involved in the black power movement and much sought after as a spokesman and organizer, Cleage worked to assimilate the radical, anticlerical elements of the movement into a reconstructed black church that had been

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<sup>135</sup> Mary S. Campbell, "Chronology of Events (1963-1973)" *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963-1973* (New York, N.Y.: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1985) 85. It should be noted that Black Arts Conventions of 1966 and 1967 precedes Jeff Donaldson's Conference on the Functional Aspects of Black Art (CONFABA) of 1968 at Northwestern University. These conferences should be understood as important forums where black art was defined for a wide audience.

<sup>136</sup> Scholars of African American religion recognize the 1960s as a period of redefinition for the Black Church that resulted in the birth of Black Liberation Theology.

<sup>137</sup> James Cone, "Foundational Voices before 1980: Introduction," *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Volume One, 1966-1979*, James Cones and Gayraud Wilmore, eds. (New York: Orbis Books, 1993) 89-88.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Dr. James Cone was one of the early voices to define Black Liberation Theology from an academic setting at Union Theological Seminary. He defined Black Theology in his address. Cone's text, *Black Theology and Black Power* (1970), was released the same year as this inaugural Black Christian Nationalist Convention.

divested of the theology of white Christianity. A recurring proposition in his work is the brotherhood of blacks who prefer one another to the white enemy and who can rebuild the ghetto through self-help and mutual aid—a familiar theme in the history of the African American community.<sup>139</sup>

Cleage was concerned with institution building rooted in new ideologies and iconographies.

Although it may appear as though Cleage was merely arguing for a brand of cultural and religious nationalism, his insistence on identifying a racial legacy inherited from antiquity provided an important foundation that Black Liberation theologians would further interrogate.<sup>140</sup>

By the 1960s, the Rev. Cleage was one of the most visible and vocal northern ministers simultaneously addressing social and theological issues. In addition to participating in clerical organizations such as the National Committee of Negro Churchmen and the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, Cleage actively critiqued the black church as an inefficient institution that risked its future by not adapting with black protest traditions. His view developed into this perspective espoused in the introduction to *Black Messiah*:

In the North, where the black man's problems at one time seemed less pressing, the Black Church has failed miserably to relate itself to the seething ghetto rebellions and therefore has practically cut itself off from vast segments of the black community. The Northern Church has been black on the outside only, borrowing its theology, its orientation and its social ideology largely from the white Church and the white power structure. The present crisis, involving as it does the black man's struggle for survival in America, demands the resurrection of a Black Church with its own Black Messiah.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Power, Black People and Theological Renewal," *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of Religious History of African American* (1973), (New York: Orbis Books, 2006) 245. Gayraud S. Wilmore was one of the theological minds at the forefront of defining Black Theology. He was also instrumental in mobilizing African American minister by co-founding the National Committee of Black Churchmen. (Cleage was a member of this organization as well.) He had an extensive teaching career at institutions including Colgate Rochester Divinity School and New York Theological Seminary. As an ordained Presbyterian minister, Wilmore was an advocate for the concerns of black communities to Presbyterian power structures.

<sup>140</sup> Two examples of this trajectory include William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist: A Preamble to Black Theology* (1973), (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).

<sup>141</sup> Cleage, "Introduction," *Black Messiah*, 8-9.

The *Black Messiah* text represents the early phases of Cleage's conception of a theology based on Black Liberation.<sup>142</sup>

He augmented these ideas in his 1972 book, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*. Across more than 260 pages, Cleage defines Black Christian Nationalism with respect to struggle, doctrine, and implementation. Cleage even addressed the cultural production of the Black Arts Movement, lauding figures including Ron Karenga, Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez.<sup>143</sup> Yet, he asserted: "We seek to shift the creative dynamics of the Black Liberation Struggle from cultural mythology to pragmatic realism."<sup>144</sup> As chapter four will demonstrate, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 quickly created a visual culture that conveyed Black Christian Nationalist aesthetics and ideals.

James Cone used Cleage's pronouncement of Christ as a Black Messiah as a point of departure to ask some of the questions central to academic expressions of Black Liberation

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<sup>142</sup> Cone and Wilmore, "General Introduction," *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Volume One, 1966-1979*, 4.

<sup>143</sup> Nagueyalti Warren, "Pan-African Cultural Movements: From Baraka to Karenga" *The Journal of Negro History* 75 (1990): 16-28.; Komozi Maulana Ron Karenga (1941-) is an author, activist and a leading advocate for Black Cultural Nationalism. He is also credited with creating the Kawaida doctrine . According to Warren, the Kawaida Doctrine was a "system to promote self-awareness and build political consciousness through adherence to a black value system." This system would provide the philosophical foundation for Kwanzaa, an Afrocentric celebration of African value that provides an alternative for Christmas. Fellow poet, Sonia Sanchez (1934- ) also taught at BARTS. Like Baraka, Sanchez was a part of the Greenwich Village poet scene in New York. *We a BaddDDD People* (1970); and *Homecoming* (1969) represent some of her earliest literary contributions to the Black Art Movement. In addition to her work as a prolific poet and author, Sanchez also was a pioneer in helping construct one of the earliest Black Studies curricula at San Francisco State University. She has maintained this role in shaping the discourse of Black Art in editing BAM anthologies such as *SOS—Calling All Black People: a Black Arts Movement Reader*.

<sup>144</sup> Cleage, "The Yakub Myth," *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972) 101; Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, "Program for the First Annual Convention of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement and the Black Preacher's Conference and the Conference of Black Youth," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 38, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This program listed James Cone as delivering a lecture entitled "Black Theology." The Rev. Henry Mitchell offered a paper entitled, "Black Preaching." *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church* publication even included a selection of papers presented at the First Black Christian Nationalist Convention, hosted by the Shrine of the Black Madonna.

Theology. In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone offers this rationale for seriously engaging Cleage's assertions:

To get at the meaning of this and not get bogged down in racial emotionalism, we need only ask, "Is it possible to talk about suffering in America without talking about the meaning of blackness? Black theology contends that blackness is the only symbol that cannot be overlooked if we are going to take seriously the Christological significance of the Jesus Christ... "Does black theology believe that Jesus was *really* black?" It seems to me that the *literal* color of Jesus is irrelevant, as are the different shades of blackness in America... But as it happens, *Jesus was not white* in any sense of the word, literally or theologically. Therefore, Albert Cleage is not too far wrong when he describes Jesus as a black Jew; and he is certainly on solid theological grounds when he describes Christ as the Black Messiah.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to Cone, Gayraud Wilmore also recognized Cleage's contribution by moving beyond the question of Christ's racial ancestry to the "ontological significance of the color black" in responding to oppression.<sup>146</sup> As evidenced by Cone and Wilmore, Cleage was an influential voice in establishing the foundational issues Black Liberation Theology addressed.

Although Cleage is popularly remembered as a proponent of Jesus Christ as a Black Messiah, he should be celebrated for his leadership in actualizing an environment and landscape of spaces that express Black Nationalism. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 was a site of confluence for black radicalism where the intersection of Black Nationalism, the Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology fueled material and iconographic shifts.

### **The Range of Ritual-Architectural Events at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1**

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 129-130.

<sup>146</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, "The Black Messiah: Revising the Color Symbolism of Western Christology,(1974)" *Pragmatic Spirituality: the Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) 128.

From 1958 to the early 1970s, the congregation experienced three phases of ritual-architectural events that altered this religious community's identity. These events were initiated in 1967 with the unveiling of the *Black Madonna* mural. The second phase is anchored by convening of the Second Annual Black Arts Convention and the People's Tribunal in Central Congregational Church's sanctuary in the fall of 1967. The final ritual-architectural event took place across a series of liturgical innovations and revisions that expressed the development of Black Christian Nationalism. Central Congregational Church underwent a series of shifts in communal identity that reflect revisions and redefinitions in theology, ritual and the social life of the church. The following chronology will weave together religious, economic and socio-political developments in an effort to emphasize the dynamism of this community evolution.

Reorganization of the church body established the foundation for the first phase of ritual-architectural events. In the year following the purchase of the church, the congregation's leaders organized the membership by family into area groups according to residency. Church histories recognize this as the implementation of the group model, influenced by the social organization of West African societies.<sup>147</sup> These groups were responsible for outreach in their local neighborhoods as well as the organization of social activities. In most cases, the proceeds from Area Group activities were donated to a church fund.<sup>148</sup> This model facilitated an emphasis on social engagement and socio-cultural advancement. By the early 1960s, the Rev. Albert Cleage publically promoted the socio-religious revisions in an effort to position the church as a center for social uplift and activism.

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<sup>147</sup> "Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24, 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>148</sup> "Area Group #1 Report—1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 28, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

; Area Group #4 Report—1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 34, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

Central Congregational Church founded a Heritage Committee in 1966 and tasked it with the responsibility of transforming spatial, visual and ritual components to correspond with evolving religious tenets. They planned major projects that would result in the installation of a new chancel mural in 1967 and authoring new hymns. This new body of music reflected both specific and broader developments in African American musical worship.<sup>149</sup> George Norman composed a hymn entitled “The Black Madonna.”<sup>150</sup> This musical composition contains the refrain: “If Mother Mary was black like you and me, What color, What color was her child?”<sup>151</sup> Popular gospel songs such as James Cleveland’s 1962 arrangement of “Peace Be Still” were sung used alongside original songs by members. By the early 1970s, the church newspaper advertised for the Black Christian Nationalist Choir Gospel Song Festival by including a photograph of choir members with full afros and elevated fists singing on the steps of the chancel.<sup>152</sup> Both the songs

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<sup>149</sup> For more information on James Cleveland’s contribution to the history of gospel music, see the following sources: Bob Darden, *People Get Ready!: A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Birgitta Joelisa Johnson, “Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”: Music and Worship in African American Megachurches of Los Angeles, California.” (Ph.D.- diss. 2008). “Black Christian National Songs,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 5, Folder 5, 9-10. The choir verse in the songs reads as: “Our God is Black and so are we./For him we struggle to be free.”By the time Black Christian Nationalism solidifies in the 1970s, the church even includes a variation of the popular 1975 Rhythm and Blues song “Wake Up Everybody,” written by John Whitehead, Gene McFadden Victor Carstarphen; performed by Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes. For instance, a collection of Black Christian Nationalism hymns included a selection entitled, “Our God Is Black.” This song would have been influenced by the sermons the Rev. Cleage preached on the subject of Black Messiah from 1965 to 1967.

<sup>150</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of “Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 4.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, (New York: W. Morrow, 1972) 62, 64-5; BCN Gospel Song Festival advertisement, 1960s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr., Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. This announcement documents the promotion of black power in elevated fists and afro hairstyles. Above a photograph of female choir members wearing highly patterned garments and dawning afro and raised fist, the header reads “BCN Gospel Song Festival, Featuring the Nationaires.” The weekly liturgy and special events such as church choir concerts ascribe new meaning to the space. The version of Black Liberation Theology developed and practiced at the Shrine of the Black Madonna was originally defined and outlined as Black Christian Nationalism. The Rev. Albert Cleage defined Black Christian Nationalism in his 1972 book *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*. Cleage defines Black Christian Nationalism as a brand of Black Liberation theology rooted in “pragmatic realism,” the promotion of black nationhood and the political mobilization of the African American community.

and the photograph illustrated the evolution of Black Christian Nationalism. These cultural and liturgical adaptations, both minor and major, were amplified by the growing influence the congregation gained in community organization.

Central Congregational also emerged as a cultural headquarters of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism in the mid-1960s. The Men's Club held a spring 1966 event entitled "Project 66," which featured presentations by African American authors and scholars.<sup>153</sup> In June of that same year, a local organization, Forum 66, sponsored the First Annual Black Arts Convention at Central Congregational Church.<sup>154</sup> The three-day conference featured keynote lectures and workshops on music, drama, art, literature, Negro history, politics, religion and education.<sup>155</sup> In fact, Grace Lee Boggs (1915-2015) a leading figure affiliated with the development of Detroit's Marxist community, was one of the notable activists on the politics panel.<sup>156</sup> Dudley Randall

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<sup>153</sup> 1966 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 24, 12, Bentley Historical Museum; Advertisement from *The Black Nation News*, 28 Apr 1969, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 5, Folder 15, 7, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This event was the impetus for the Spring Forum, a month-long lecture series. By 1969, the Spring Forum featured the top figure in Black Liberation Theology and the Black Arts Movement. Lecturers included LeRoi Jones, Dr. James Cone, Don Lee, Dr. Samuel Allen and Dr. Alvin Poussaint.

<sup>154</sup> "1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 28, Bentley Historical Museum,

<sup>155</sup> Dudley Randall, "A Report on the Black Arts Convention, *Negro Digest*, August 1966, 56. <  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=2zkDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA1&pg=PA58#v=onepage&q&f=false>>  
(accessed: September 15, 2015)

<sup>156</sup> Dudley Randall, "A Report on the Black Arts Convention, *Negro Digest*, August 1966, 57. <  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=2zkDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA1&pg=PA58#v=onepage&q&f=false>>  
(accessed: September 15, 2015); Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).; James Boggs, and Grace Lee Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). Bill Mullen, "'Philosophy Must Be Proletarian': The Dialectical Humanism of Grace Lee and James Boggs," *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). Grace Lee was second-generation Chinese-American from New York. In 1940, she earned his doctorate in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College. She married labor activist James Boggs (1919-1993) and together they shaped the ideological tenants of Detroit's activist communities. The Bogges would contribute to not only Marxist communities but also labor organizations as well as black nationalist communities. Together they actively critiqued American social and economic structures that systematically oppress. By the late twentieth century, the Bogges promoted the Marxist belief dialectical humanism as a means of revolution. Bill Mullen asserts, "Dialectical humanism is the work of individuals across race, class, and gender lines to realize what Marx called in *The German*

reported on the event for *Black World* magazine. In addition to the singing of a call and response tenor noted by Randall, he described the religious reverence shown toward the images of prominent African American community leaders such as Malcolm X and W.E.B. Du Bois.<sup>157</sup> Cleage's daughter, Kristin Cleage Williams recalled heated debates on critical issues within the African American community at the meeting.<sup>158</sup>

Church histories recognize 1967 as a pivotal year for the congregation, also emphasizing the reorientation of Central Church's decorative program.<sup>159</sup> The unveiling that took place on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967 constitutes the first ritual-architectural event that represents the shift in theology and ideology. This unveiling was a transformative experience that invested new meaning into the architectural style. Furthermore, the Rev. Cleage delivered a sermon entitled "The Resurrection of the Black Nation," that committed this iconography to abolition of black oppression.<sup>160</sup> This project will be explored in chapter four of this study. This mural unveiling solidified Central Congregational as a headquarters for the developing Black Nation. In 1967, the church membership doubled from 501 to 1003, thus indicating the success in advocating ideas associated with this Black Nation icon.<sup>161</sup>

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*Ideology to the fullest, 'productive activity' of human beings...Dialectical humanism is the Boggsian program for this emancipator personal and political work."*

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Kristen Cleage Williams, "The Black Arts Convention—1966" <<http://findingeliza.com/archives/9862>> (accessed: August 19, 2015).

<sup>159</sup> "Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24, 17.

<sup>160</sup> The Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. *The Black Messiah*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1968) 85-114. The Heritage Committee also completed their inaugural project of commissioning a Black Madonna chancel mural and orchestrated a successful publicity campaign that resulted in the circulation of images of this mural.

<sup>161</sup> "1967 Reports for the Fourteenth Annual Meeting—Central Congregational Church," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 25, 28, Bentley Historical Museum. "He Who is Not with Me Is Against Me: He Who Gathereth Not With Me, Scattereth (A Pre-Easter Message)" the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 2, Folder 41, 3, Bentley Historical Museum. In this reproduction of sermon the Rev. Albert Cleage delivered the Sunday before the unveiling, Cleage emphasizes a allegiance to the black nation.



Cleage passionately outlined a theological interpretation of Christ as Black revolutionary Messiah. This perspective was predicated on the idea that Apostle Paul's biblical accounts distorted and depoliticized Christ.<sup>162</sup> In the *Black Madonna* mural dedicatory sermon, the Rev. Cleage emphasizes that a reevaluation and repositioning of the Pauline Epistles were necessary for African American Christians. In the aforementioned sermon entitled, "Resurrection of the Nation," Cleage offers this rationale:

During this early period when people were trying to determine the meaning of the life and death of Jesus, the Apostle Paul came on the scene with an entirely new interpretation. He had never seen Jesus in the flesh, but his interpretation dominated the early Church and greatly influenced the Gospels when they were written... Why were the followers of Jesus critical of the Apostle Paul? Because the Apostle Paul was leaning over backwards to convert the Gentiles... Paul was taking the religion of a Black Nation to white people who had no background in religion. But to make it acceptable to them he had to change it.<sup>163</sup>

Cleage links this misrepresentation to the misuse of Christianity to validate the colonization and enslavement of people of color. Cleage launches a critique of the Black Church's uncontested acceptance of a Christianity that emphasized the superiority of whiteness.

The second ritual-architectural event was comprised of a series of socio-political gatherings held in the sanctuary that grafted meanings of cultural advancement and justice.<sup>164</sup> The first event was the Second Annual Black Arts Convention in 1967. Akin to the other major events held at Central Congregational Church, the Black Arts Convention quickly gained the reputation of promoting radical activism. This is confirmed by detailed documentation at the

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<sup>162</sup> Cleage, "The Resurrection of the Nation," *Black Messiah*, 89-90. The Pauline Gospels are the thirteen New Testament books that are comprised of letters the Apostle Paul were thought to be authored to early Christian communities.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 88-89.

<sup>164</sup> This would offer a model of physical and philosophical transformation Shrine communities remained committed to during the period of expansion the church engages in during the 1970s.

United States Senate hearing on Civil Disobedience in 1968.<sup>165</sup> The Detroit Riots of July 1967 established this religious community's central role in the African American landscape. The Detroit Rebellion also forced the church to take on connotations of justice as the church hosted the second event, the People's Tribunal. The People's Tribunal allowed citizens to place Detroit cops accused of murder during the rebellion on trial. In contemporary accounts, the four day of civil unrest is historicized as the result of police raid on an unlicensed bar resulting in the arrest of seventy individuals.<sup>166</sup> After the deployment of the National Guard and the destruction of twenty Detroit city blocks, the riots became a politically divisive issue that prompted local and national debate.

In addition to coordinating relief efforts in the days after the riot, Central Congregational Church hosted the funeral for Tanya Blanding, one of the youngest victims of the violence associated with the riots.<sup>167</sup> According to news reports, Blanding was killed when officer gunfire hit her second story home. The recollection of the event included in an early Central Congregational Church history blames a "trigger happy National Guard trooper."<sup>168</sup> Emerging as a material beacon of community survival during the Detroit Rebellion, Central Congregational

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<sup>165</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Government Operations. Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Riots, Civil And Criminal Disorders: Hearings Before the United States Senate Committee On Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations, Ninetieth And Ninety-First Congresses Part 6, 22 March 1968 (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1967)1415-1418.<  
<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100666620>> (accessed1970)

<sup>166</sup> Peniel Joseph, *Wait 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2006), 186.

<sup>167</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 5. This history states that Central Congregational immediately set up food distribution services during and after the riots. Using the term rebellion instead of riot, this narrative lists the church as the first religious community to respond to the riot. The church also assisted community members in securing new housing and locate" friends and relatives lost during the struggle."

<sup>168</sup> "U.S. Sued for the Death of a Girl, 4" *Jet* magazine  
<<https://books.google.com/books?id=PDgDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA41&dq=tanya%20blanding&pg=PA41#v=onepage&q=tanya%20blanding&f=false>>; Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9,6.

met the spiritual and physical needs of its community by hosting Blanding's funeral and coordinating post-riot recovery efforts.

Whereas the Bland funeral spiritually united the Africa American community, the 1967 People's Tribunal grafted symbolic connotations of justice onto the space. Central Congregational Church pursued justice for the black victims of the riots. The church hosted a People's Tribunal, organized by Citywide Citizens Action Committee (CCAC), to try two white officers. The church history states the People's Tribunal set out "to properly try police officers and National Guard Troops who brutally executed several young Black Men in the Algiers Motel during the rebellion."<sup>169</sup> The People's Tribunal assessed the probability for guilt and innocence for two Detroit Police officers.<sup>170</sup>

The cast of participants included Kenneth V. Cockrell presiding as a judge, Attorney Milton Henry serving as prosecutor and Russell S. Brown and Sol Plafkin acting on behalf of the defense. A preselected jury of twelve individuals returned a guilty verdict.<sup>171</sup> Cleage even preached on the subject of justice in a sermon entitled, "Fear is Gone." Cleage asserts "For the oppressed, that is for us, for all black people, to talk about law and order, peace and brotherhood is either insanity or it is craven cowardice... We can't be concerned with law and order, peace and brotherhood, until we first get justice. Securing justice is our basic concern."<sup>172</sup> This second series of ritual-architectural events established the socio-political aspect of this site, rooted in a concern for justice. The funeral of Tanya Blanding and the People's Tribunal exposed mourners to this

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<sup>169</sup> <sup>169</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 6.

<sup>170</sup> United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Government Operations. Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Riots, Civil And Criminal Disorders: Hearings Before the United States Senate Committee On Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee On Investigations, Ninetieth And Ninety-First Congresses Part 6*, 22 March 1968 (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1967) 1419-1420.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Albert Cleage, "Fear is Gone," *Black Messiah*, 16.

Black Nationalist site, anchored by the *Black Madonna* mural, extending the visibility of the black nation's icon.

The third phase of ritual-architectural events of 1969 through 1971 consisted of the advancement of theological and liturgical revisions in Central Congregational Church, which now took on the name Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, in 1970. The Rev. Albert Cleage amplified his promotion of Central Congregational as a church concerned with revolutionizing theology and social activism.<sup>173</sup> Cleage commented on political figures from the era such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. *Black Messiah* directly confronted the increased surveillance Black Nationalists endured nationally and in radical centers such as Detroit. In March 1968, J. Edgar Hoover advised his agents in a memo to "...prevent the rise of a black 'messiah' who would unify and electrify the Black Nationalist Movement."<sup>174</sup> Cleage directly addressed this in his sermon, "Great Gettin' Up Morning." Cleage declares:

We're constantly trying to find a new messiah and we have discarded them if they don't produce. All of our leaders have to be little messiahs... You go back as far as Booker T. Washington. He wasn't just a leader in the sense that he was leading a people. He was going to do something for us. He was the symbol of God acting for us. Then came Du Bois and Marcus Garvey and we were in a dilemma because we had two Black Messiahs who were fighting each other...<sup>175</sup>

With this publication, Cleage redressed the term by undergirding it with tenets of what was developing into Black Christian Nationalism.<sup>176</sup> *Black Messiah* also posited a notion of Christianity for African Americans that allowed for contesting black oppression.

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<sup>173</sup> The Rev. Albert Cleage, "We Must Control Our Community," *Michigan Chronicle*, 12 Aug 1967 cited in Dillard, 362. On August 12, the *Michigan Chronicle* published the first entry for what would become his weekly column.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Linfield, *Freedom Under Fire: U.S. Civil Liberties in Times of War* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 123; Joseph, *Wait 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, 188.

<sup>175</sup> Cleage, "Great Getting' Up Morning," *Black Messiah*, 178.

<sup>176</sup> Cleage discussed the history and iconography of the black messiah across at least five sermons in *Black Messiah*.

During the late 1960s, Cleage and Central Congregational Church cultivated Black Christian Nationalism (BCN). The Black Christian Nationalist Movement bears the influence of Black Nationalist ideology, the nascent expressions of Black Liberation Theology and the cultural revolution of the Black Arts Movement. The Black Christian Nationalist Movement set out to transform the black church from a preaching church to a social action-oriented church.<sup>177</sup> In addition to revising theology, Christian education and evangelism, Black Christian Nationalism required social engagement of the black church. Black Christian Nationalism called for a “special cadre of community organizers,” committed to educating and mobilizing African Americans around the liberation struggle.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, Cleage and BCN posited the necessity for black churches to support and collaborate with United Front and youth organizations.<sup>179</sup> One of the most profound shifts in Black Christian Nationalism is the belief that baptism commits individuals to “a revolutionary struggle” for black liberation.<sup>180</sup>

The four stanza Black Christian Nationalist Creed was implemented in worship services as an affirmation of spiritual and social commitments. This religious statement grounds Christianity in a doctrine of social justice and Black communalism.<sup>181</sup> In addition to radicalizing the Holy Trinity with references such as “the revolutionary Holy Spirit” and “the revolutionary spirit of God, embodied in the Black Messiah,” the creed emphasized the Black Liberation

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<sup>177</sup> Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972) 65.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, Xiii. “The Black Christian Nationalist Creed” affirms a commitment to Christianity concerned with Pan-African Black Liberation. The first stanza claims a divine right to confront injustice. In addition to acknowledging the “Revolutionary Holy Spirit,” the second stanza offers a rationale for understanding Christ as a Black Messiah. The third stanza draws heavily from West and Central African philosophies that integrate ancestors into spiritual paradigms. This passage attests to the intergenerational and regenerative qualities of the Black Messiah. The final stanza expresses a dedication to notions of communalism. The creed concludes by committing to the “values, ethics, morals and program of the Black Nation” and the goals of the struggle for liberation.

narrative of Christ as a black revolutionary leader.<sup>182</sup> The concluding stanza affirms a restructured notion of community that rejects individual self-interest. The creed ends with these words: “I Believe that both my survival and my salvation depends upon my willingness to reject individualism and so I can commit my life to the Liberation Struggle of Black people and accept the values, ethics, morals and programs of the Black Nation defined by that struggle and taught by the Black Christian Nationalist Movement.”<sup>183</sup> The congregation members recommitted themselves to elements of Black Nationalism and Black Liberation Theology every Sunday. Thus, this creed advanced and affirmed a reconceptualization of Christianity that was rooted in alleviating Black oppression.

This same sentiment was expressed in a church code of conduct outlined in the 1968 new members’ guidebook. This seven point directive emphasized respect, in behavior and self-presentation, for all sectors of the Black Nation: especially elders, children and women.<sup>184</sup> This code also advised members on how to engage with white people respectfully, while advancing the goals of the Black Nation.<sup>185</sup> The congregation also approved the renaming of area groups to action groups.<sup>186</sup> Under this new title, the groups conducted social services to their surrounding community on behalf of the church and addressed maintenance obligations at the church.<sup>187</sup> At

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<sup>182</sup> Cleage, “The Black Christian Nationalist Creed” *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, (New York: William Morrow & Company Inc., 1972) xiii.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>184</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of “Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 12.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* 12, 16. The section on manners states, “All members of the nation must conduct themselves in a manner that will add to and not take away from our struggle.” The code also advised: “Black people in the Nation must treat whites as whites treat them. Show him you can be just as courteous as he is and still be for Black Power as he is for white power...Don’t ever lose sight of the goals of Black Power, self-determination and the rebuilding of the Black Nation.”

<sup>186</sup> “Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church, Chronology” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24, 17. This chronology defined some of the typical activities of action groups which included “distribution of clothing to the needy, working for the Black political candidates and organizing for BiAfrican crisis relief in Africa.”

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

the same time, the Rev. Cleage and the congregation promoted their perspectives in both mainstream and African American newspaper outlets. In November 1968, the *New York Times* reported on the activity of the Rev. Cleage and Central Congregation and even included a photograph of Cleage in the sanctuary.<sup>188</sup> In 1970, the same photograph of the Rev. Cleage in Central Congregational's sanctuary was printed in color for the cover of the United Church of Christ's denominational organ, *United Church Herald*. Central Congregational Church furthered their revisionist objectives by recirculating photographs of the chancel mural.

In the second installment of the *Baltimore Sun*'s 1969 series "Negroes and the Church," Cleage outlined the theological and liturgical advancements under the headline, "Leaders Seek A Black Theology." The report states: "Mr. Cleage is developing a black liturgy for use in his Shrine of the Black Madonna, a congregation of the United Church of Christ. It will include black versions of Jewish festivals, for Mr. Cleage finds strong kinship between American black men and Israelites in bondage."<sup>189</sup> Cleage also founded the congregation's newsletter, *Black Nation News* in 1969.<sup>190</sup> This organ advertised public events held at the church such as a Black Studies series that featured leading scholars in this emerging academic field of study.<sup>191</sup> Within a year, *Black Nation News* featured photographic images of the religious community and contributions from the congregation and local activists. Although Central Congregational Church did not

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<sup>188</sup> Edward B. Price, "Color God Black," *New York Times*, 10 Nov 1968, Proquest Historical: New York Times (1923-Current) <<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/docview/118419714/88E1D1F3FD1448B2PQ/1?accountid=9676>> (accessed: Fe. 20, 2016).

<sup>189</sup> Weldon Wallace, "Negroes and the Church," *Baltimore Sun*, 21 August 1969, A1, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 17, 19, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. The aforementioned *Baltimore Sun* article is also an indication of the congregation's decision to change their name.

<sup>190</sup> Chapter Four will offer a thorough analysis of the visual strategies employed in *Black Nation News*.

<sup>191</sup> "Black Studies Series at Detroit's Black Madonna Church," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 11 August 1970, Newspaper Archives, Library of Congress.

officially become the Shrine of the Black Madonna until 1970, this community promoted a re-presentation agenda.

On April 1, 1970, the Shrine of the Black Madonna hosted the First Annual Convention of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement. This five day event brought together the various factions that were defining Black Liberation Theology and Black Nationalism. During the first day of this conference, Dr. James Cone, the leading scholar of Black Liberation Theology and the Rev. Henry Mitchell offered lectures.<sup>192</sup> The program also dedicated time to exploring variations of experimental worship.<sup>193</sup> This experimental worship component was integrated into liturgy at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, resulting in the addition of meditative chanting in Kiswahili at weekly services.<sup>194</sup> Cleage and his congregation also revised the traditional Christian communion ritual into the Holy Sacrament of Commitment.<sup>195</sup> According to religious studies scholar Jawanza Clark, the Christian sacrament of communion and the African derived sacrament of libations were merged.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, the Holy Sacrament of Commitment honors Christ as an African ancestor and affirms one's dedication to the Black Nation.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 inaugurated the Festival of the Black Messiah on Sunday, November 28, 1971.<sup>197</sup> The church described the month long series as offering "a correct

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<sup>192</sup> "First Annual Convention of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement: The Black Preacher's Conference & the Conference of Black Youth," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 40, 1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. The Rev. Henry Mitchell was teaching at the Divinity School at Colgate Rochester at the time. He delivered an address entitled "Black Preaching." He was at the forefront of outlining the theological implications of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Christian activism, in publish interviews where he proposed a Martin Luther King Program in Black Church Studies. In 1979, his book *Black Preaching* was published.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Jawanza E. Clark, "The dead are not dead: A constructive, African-centered theological anthropology," (Ph.D. diss.—Emory University, 2003) 211.

<sup>195</sup> Clark, 213.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 214.

<sup>197</sup> "Festival of the Black Messiah Press Release," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 42, 18, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.



interpretation of the meaning of the life of Jesus.”<sup>198</sup> In the closing passage of the Shrine’s press release announcing the event, the author asserts, “BCN understands that Black people have accepted the materialistic and individualistic values of whites, without question, in connection with [Christmas and Easter]... The meaning of Jesus’ life must be evaluated in terms of the Black Liberation Struggle, and not in traditional white racist terms.”<sup>199</sup> These are the types of event-rituals and minor occasions that transformed the theological and social meaning of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. The codification of these annual practices and rituals was crucial during the 1970s as the church launched satellite churches and developed a nationwide religious network.

The Rev. Cleage accelerated the promotion of Black Christian Nationalism in his authorship and editorial obligations during the 1970s.<sup>200</sup> The following year, Cleage’s second book, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, was published by William -Morrow & Company, Inc.<sup>201</sup> Black Christian Nationalism is defined there by a firm commitment to the potential of Pan-Africanist ideologies. The Rev. Cleage eloquently explains the necessity of de-centering Western epistemologies with Pan-African paradigms with these words: “No concept of power short of a worldwide Pan-Africanism can protect Black people from the dehumanizing effects of white individualism.”<sup>202</sup> Chapter thirteen of *Black Christian*

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>200</sup> Clyde Leonard Manschreck, *Erosion of Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971). His essay “Authority and the Black Revolution,” was included in *Erosion of Authority*. In this essay, the Rev. Cleage calls for a posture of challenge toward Western power structures that oppress black people. Months later, a reflection entitled, “The Black Messiah and the Black Revolution” was published under the title, “The Black Church” in the volume *A Quest for Black Theology*.

<sup>201</sup> Across almost three-hundred pages, Cleage defined the social-political and philosophical elements of the liberation theology promoted at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. Cleage notes in the acknowledgements that these ideas were the result of lectures and debates among African American ministers and university students. In this way, BCN philosophies reflect communal efforts to redefine cultural paradigms.

<sup>202</sup> Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, 103.

*Nationalism*, entitled “Programming for Liberation,” reinforces this Pan-Africanist socio-religious agenda. In outlining the Black Christian Nationalist training program, the Rev. Cleage explains the process with these words:

Because there are three phases in our training program (creating the motivation to change, unlearning the old, and learning the new), we place great emphasis on our school of Black Studies (Alkebu-Lan Academy), which replaces the traditional church school and works with elementary and junior-high children and young people... When an individual walks down front and says ‘I want to join the Black Nation,’ he publicly admits that he desires to be changed. In accepting him we agree to assist in his transformation... The total Black Christian Nationalist program is founded upon training. This is our basic contribution to the Black struggle... Our basic twelve-month training program starts with Kuanza, the act of beginning, and is called Kua, the process of growing.<sup>203</sup>

This program aims to reorient members’ worldviews by questioning Western assumptions and advancing African-centered Christian paradigms. The first stage of Kuanza, referred to as confirmation, ends with a baptism into the Black Nation.<sup>204</sup> This ritual combines elements of Christian Baptism and an African naming ceremony.<sup>205</sup> The emphasis on cultural and theological training alongside the extensive membership commitments were designed to create the infrastructure for a Black Nation.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, Central Congregational transformed their iconographic, liturgical and socio-political practice to emerge as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. As the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, this religious community was able to pioneer and promote a Christian iteration of Black Nationalism. This church hosted the leaders that defined the contours of the Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology. Under the leadership of the Rev. Cleage, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, provided the heart to a social program intended to sustain and uplift African Americans across class. The gradual layering of

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>205</sup> Clark, 212.

African-derived symbolism onto the 1920 Colonial Revival structure revolutionized traditional meaning for this architectural style. In the midst of the 1967 Detroit Race Riots, this structure was left untouched and remains a beacon of African American survival. The Shrine of the Black Madonna establishments furthered the mother church's initial Black Nationalist Christian style through art and visual culture.

**Conclusion: Shrine of the Black Madonna as Religious Model and Pan-Africanist Headquarters**

This religious community reconsidered theological and social ideologies in order to construct a world view dedicated to overcoming black oppression. Jawanza Clark analyzes these changes and negotiations in his dissertation, concluding:

The church merges Black Nationalist ideology, with Christian and indigenous African elements in a theological and philosophical mix that is constructed to achieve a pragmatic and practical result: black liberation. The church defines liberation as the building and maintenance of independent institutions owned and controlled by the black community that can ensure political, cultural and economic independence from oppressive elements of a racist, American society.<sup>206</sup>

This tradition springs from the desire of a religious community to worship in the community they wished to serve. This chapter has documented the history of the structure Central Congregational purchased and repurposed into the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. Through ritual-architectural events and investing the space with activist meetings, a Colonial Revival style church was dedicated to the service of Black Liberation Theology, the Black Arts Movement and the local labor movement. By the 1970s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 would become the heart of a network of spaces, secular and sacred, reserved for the black nation.

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<sup>206</sup> Clark, 214.

Following the introduction of Black Christian Nationalism in the Rev. Cleage's 1972 book, the Shrine commenced an ambitious expansion program. The purchase of Black Christian Nationalism Training and Residence Hall at 700 Seward Street initiated this agenda.<sup>207</sup> More practically, the property assisted in accommodating the evolving ministry. This six story building was a residential structure repurposed to maintain some housing and provide multipurpose space. This structure is still owned and utilized by the Shrine of the Black Madonna churches.<sup>208</sup>

By 1977, Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 members established churches across Michigan, and in Cleveland and Atlanta.<sup>209</sup> *The Black Nation News* included layouts that celebrated the growth. A fold-out collage of photographs and illustrations visually sketches the distinction of this black nation.<sup>210</sup> This document reinforced the symbolic import the Colonial Revival style gained, as Shrine religious communities occupied more industrial spaces such as Shrine of the Black Madonna Church and Cultural Center, #2. This same advertisement also includes a preliminary draft of a structure to indicate the potential for erecting a network of complexes; an unexplored aspect of the Shrine of the Black Madonna's architectural legacy.

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<sup>207</sup> BCN advertisement featuring a photograph of BCN National Training Center, 1960s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan, photograph by author. The Shrine of the Black Madonna churches continued to acquire properties as promoted on this flyer. In addition to two new church locations, the Shrine converted buildings into facilities for education, professional enrichment, ministry and community service. In this pamphlet, the cover features a photograph of a substantial six story structure repurposed into a BCN Training Center.

<sup>208</sup> The structure is now referred to as the Pan-African Residences and the Dr. Albert J. Cleage, Sr. Memorial Health Center.

<sup>209</sup> "Shrine of the Black Madonna, Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church, Chronology" the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 24. Shrine, #, located in northwest Detroit, opened in 1972. Shrine, #2 was dedicated in 1973 on Detroit's eastside. Atlanta's Shrine of the Black Madonna, #9 was organized in Atlanta in 1975 and served as a regional headquarters. Two years later, two Shrine churches were consecrated: Shrine #7 in Kalamazoo, Michigan and Shrine, #10 in Houston, Texas. In the 1980s, Shrine, #10 opened a KUA Meditation Center as well as a Cultural Center and Bookstore.

<sup>210</sup> Expansion Fund Report foldout advertisement, 1960s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This expansion poster projects the imprint the Shrine of the Black Madonna made in Michigan. The spaces appear to be former industrial or commercial sites repurposed by the congregation. Beneath the Expansion fund banner, the text reads: To establish new Shrines, schools and communes.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna churches in Atlanta and Houston advanced the architectural appropriative pattern. Today, the *Black Madonna and Child* mural is housed in George D. Mason's 1925 edifice. The following chapter will examine the mural tradition and iconographies that evolve out of this space. The network of Shrine of the Black Madonna churches attest to a legacy of physical, spatial intervention that expressed the central beliefs and rituals of Black Christian Nationalism.

In contrast to the featured church in the first case study of this dissertation, Central Congregational Church represents a history of African Americans maintaining association with white mainstream Protestant denominations. From this position, Central Congregational Church advanced a Black Nationalist agenda and in some way confronted the broader denomination with these concerns. Central Congregational Church engaged in the struggle for black liberation with an interest in bringing about change in dominant white power structures. Central Congregational Church embodied and demonstrated the revolutionary cultural changes taking place in African American culture. Emerging as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, this religious community promoted Black Nationalist and Marxist ideologies. This church was also a center that supported the development of Black Liberation Theology as well as the Black Arts Movement. The activities of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 should be understood in the historical context of Postmodern revisionist programs of the last quarter of the twentieth century. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 actively practiced a key element of Postmodern philosophy: the de-centering of dominant Western epistemologies. Moreover, this religious community also promoted Post-Colonial perspectives as they moved toward Pan-Africanist paradigms during the 1970s.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 dedicated their religious home to confronting oppression and cultivating liberation. Across a series of ritual-architectural events, this church

transformed into a platform to address the individual and communal needs of the African American community. The first ritual-architectural experience, the unveiling of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural, redefined the normative aesthetic common in black churches. As the next chapter will outline, this mural exists as one of the earliest Black Arts Movement murals to encourage a re-imagining of images and iconography for African Americans. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 continues to occupy the original 1925 structure. Today, it is referred to as the headquarters and mother church of the movement. Interestingly, both the Shrine, #1 (Detroit) and Shrine, #10 (Houston) purchased Colonial Revival churches, previously commissioned by white congregations.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna churches represent strategic interventions in African American urban landscapes. These interventions are intended to improve the surrounding environment, the spiritual condition, and the social engagement of African Americans. The Colonial Revival style conceals a Black Christian Nationalist material program. The act of entering Shrine, #1 simulates the cognitive and spiritual journey Black Christian Nationalism requires. Considering the church was situated in an African American neighborhood, before encountering this religious space, one perhaps engages with the American built environment. Upon entering the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, the use of the space, both sacred and secular, as well as the visual culture that adorned the church demands viewers who experience this building to question the validity and authoritative function Western Christian iconography has served. Finally, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 expanded expectations for the social function of the black church as a cultural political institution.



Figure 4.1. George D. Mason & Co., Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, 1925, Detroit Michigan, photograph by the author.

The design of Central Congregational combines Colonial Revival church architectural form including a temple front portico, rounded arch windows, tower and cupola. The 1925 structure reflects the popularity of the Colonial Revival architectural style among Protestant denominations. In 1957, the Rev. Cleage and his congregation purchased the church originally constructed for a predominantly white religious community.



Figure 4.2. Unidentified architect, 2254 Chicago Boulevard Mansion, googlemaps, accessed: August 10, 2016).

Prior to acquiring their church building, this structure served the dual function as a home to the Cleage family and a facility to host church activity held during the week. The finished basement was even used for youth dances hosted by the congregation.





Figure 4.3. Gordon W. Lloyd, Westminster Presbyterian Church (demolished), c. 1890, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

Central Congregational selected this structure as an ideal home for the newly formed religious body. This expansive site included two sanctuaries and numerous multifunctional spaces.



1898 Detroit Opera House 93  
Figure 4.4. Mason & Rice Co., Detroit Opera House, Detroit, Michigan, demolished, erected 1893, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.



Figure 4.5. George D. Mason & Company, Temple Beth El, 1902, Detroit, Michigan, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

This synagogue exemplifies the collaborative projects Mason and his chief designer Albert Kahn completed during Kahn's brief tenure at Mason's architectural firm. The structure displays a balance of classical elements with modern materials in the concealed iron structural support for the dome and massing.



Figure 4.6. George D. Mason & Company, Siegel Mausoleum at Woodmere Cemetery, 1908, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

During the early 1890s, Mason was highly sought-after for private, public and religious commissions.



Figure 4.7. George D. Mason & Co., Masonic Temple, 1908, Detroit, Michigan, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

Mason received international recognition for his design for the world's largest masonic temple.



Figure 4.8. George D. Mason & Co., Pilgrim Congregational Church on Linwood Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, 1926, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

This early photograph shows Pilgrim Congregational Church one year after its completion.



Figure 4.9. George D. Mason & Co., Cupola of Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, erected 1926, Detroit Michigan, photograph by author.

This tower and cupola supported by a projecting temple-form portico suggests the influence of James Gibbs' St. Martin of the Field Church.

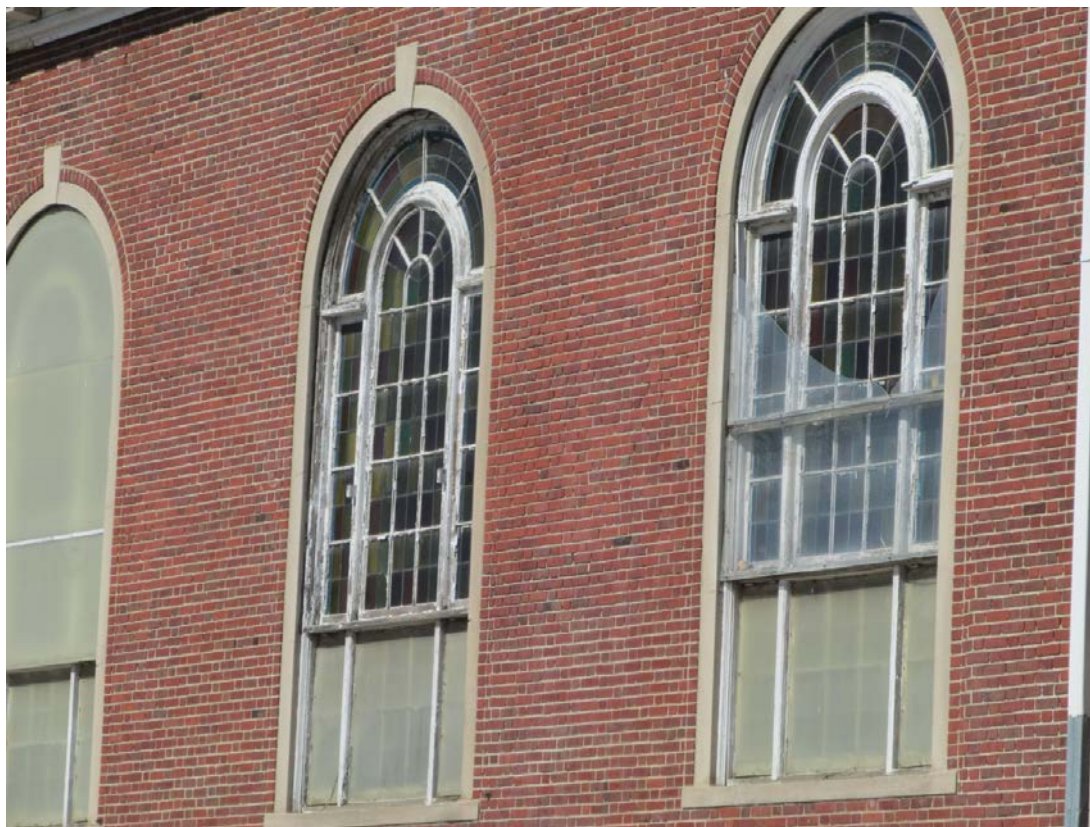


Figure 4.10. George D. Mason & Co., Exterior Sanctuary Wall of Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, 1926, Detroit Michigan, photograph by author.

This detail of the sanctuary side wall illustrates the material variety of the facade in the brick, stone and wood elements.





Figure 4.11. George D. Mason & Co., Hogarth Avenue Exterior Sanctuary Wall of Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, Detroit, Michigan, erected 1926, photograph by author.

The side doors are framed with classicized scroll brackets. This photograph also makes visible the plaster under the portico.



Figure 4.12. George D. Mason & Co., Exterior Auxiliary Wall of Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, Detroit Michigan, photograph by author.

Although the exact date is not documented in the church history, an auxiliary wing that included a gymnasium, kitchen and office space was added in the 1940.



Figure 4.13. Architect unidentified, *First Congregational Church at Fort and Wayne Streets*, c.1854, Demolished, Detroit, Michigan, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

This structure exemplifies the Romanesque Revival structures in Detroit that were defined by Palladian windows and prominent vertical elements such as towers.

## **CHAPTER 5: BLACK MADONNAS, BLACK MESSIAHS AND BLACK POWER: CHARTING A BLACK CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST VISUAL CULTURE**

We feel that Christianity is basically the black man's religion, that we formed in African and Asia as evidenced in the Holy Bible... We have been told and shown through Italian Renaissance painters that Jesus was Aryan with blond hair and blue eyes. We are also led to believe that Christianity called on black people to do nothing about oppression, misery, discrimination and brutality in this world but to pray for a land of milk and honey. We reject these distorted teachings.<sup>211</sup>

--Edward Vaughn, Heritage Committee Chairman, 1968

During the 1960s, the congregation that would rename itself, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, developed and promoted alternative cultural, religious, socio-economic and political perspectives that were concerned with an ideology of Black Nationalism.<sup>212</sup> Under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. Albert Cleage Jr. this religious community attracted Detroit's activists such as Afrocentric entrepreneurial pioneer, Edward Vaughn.<sup>213</sup> Cleage called for the establishment of the Heritage Committee, which would be dedicated to efforts "to recapture, record and relate the history and culture of black people in a positive manner."<sup>214</sup> Through the Heritage Committee, this church commissioned art and created spaces to promote a visual culture committed to Black Nationalist, Black Liberation Theology and Black Arts Movement principles. The minds behind this mural included pastor, the Rev. Albert Cleage; Heritage Committee

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<sup>211</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al., History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 3, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>212</sup> By the mid-1960s, Central Congregational Church maintained denominational affiliation with the United Church of Christ. By the 1969, Central Congregational Church was unofficially known under the name to Central Congregational Church, Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. Central Congregational Church legally changed the name of the church to the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 in 1970. The Shrine maintained its denominational affiliation with the United Church of Christ. Even upon my site visit in 2014, I found the original name remains on the church sign outside of the church.

<sup>213</sup> Vaughn founded one of the earliest African-American-owned Afrocentric bookstores in the city, in the same neighborhood as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 in the early 1960s

<sup>214</sup> Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn et al. History Draft of "Welcome to the Black Nation!: a Guide for Members of the Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, 3, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

chairman, Edward Vaughn; the artist, Glanton V. Dowdell; and the artist's assistant, General George Baker. Greater attention will be given to Cleage and Dowdell as they are documented and publicized as the activist behind the mural.<sup>215</sup> As one of the early Midwestern centers of the Black Arts Movement, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, forged a cultural practice of redefinition during the early development of the Black Art Movement as well as Black Liberation Theology.

During the last half of the twentieth century, Detroit, Michigan was a catalytic urban center that cultivated a range of activist communities including local and regional proponents of the labor movement and socialist organizations.<sup>216</sup> Detroit's artists and activists nurtured the cultural and aesthetic revolution of the 1960s and 1970s that came to be known as the Black Arts Movement. This movement was nationally defined by figures like Amiri Baraka as a shift in black consciousness that called for cultural and racial unity and separatism. As home to several Black Nationalist religious organizations such as the Nation of Islam (alongside Chicago), Detroit became a Midwestern hub for the Black Arts Movement in literary and visual arts. The Black Arts Movement was a period of cultural agency and redefinition that intended to engage in the postmodern, postcolonial strategies of de-centering Western epistemologies with Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Popular histories of the Black Arts Movement in Detroit recognize the impact of the protest tradition of the city but focus almost exclusively on the literary contribution of Broadside Publishing.<sup>217</sup> Art historians Kellie Jones and Kymberly Pinder

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<sup>215</sup> Alex Poinsett, "Quest for Black Christ," *Ebony Magazine* (March 1969) as republished by Googlebooks, (accessed: March 31, 2016).

<sup>216</sup> August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>217</sup> Julius Eric Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1999); Melba Joyce Boyd, *Wrestling with the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Kellie Jones, "To the Max: Energy and Experimentation," *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964-1980*

acknowledge the role of Pastor Cleage as a leader in the development of Detroit's Black Arts Movement.<sup>218</sup> These nominal citations often celebrate Cleage without probing the full influence of the religious community he led. This dissertation chapter aims to document and analyze the cultural work of art objects and popular iconographies promoted by the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1.

The early art activities of this congregation in the spring of 1967, which featured a mural commission and a photographic campaign, situate the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as one of the earliest Black Art Movement revisionist projects. The visual record suggests the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 served as a symbolic spiritual and ideological center that influenced and facilitated the development of a Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology. This chapter will analyze the aesthetic efforts of this religious community from patronage to the establishment of church-owned cultural centers that promoted artists of African descent. Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 established a mural tradition that would come to define the Black Arts Movement and the Black Christian Nationalist aesthetic. This chapter will first provide an overview of Detroit as a hub that cultivated a range of movements that influenced the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. The study will then move to examine the activist and art backgrounds of the central figures responsible for the inaugural mural commission.

This study aims to provide a formal analysis of Glanton V. Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural that considers this artwork in the broader canon of American art. (Figure 5. 1) The Shrine of the Black Madonna's chancel mural is an important under-recognized artwork

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(New York: Studio Museum of Harlem, 2006); Kymberly N. Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006). Twenty-first century scholarship on the visual expressions of the Black Arts Movement has expanded the sites of the movement beyond the centers of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

<sup>218</sup> Kellie Jones, "To the Max: Energy and Experimentation," *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964-1980* (New York: Studio Museum of Harlem, 2006); Kymberly N. Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

in the history of African American art. By reinterpreting racialized Madonna iconography, this mural represents a return to the iconography traditionally associated with cultural redefinition in African American communities. Moreover, Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* mural and subsequent reproductions of the mural will be considered as an extension of mother and child iconography promoted by labor and socialist activist such as Elizabeth Catlett in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>219</sup> The photographic after-image of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural demonstrates how the circulation of photographs of African American activists alongside the *Black Madonna* mural advanced the aesthetic and cultural goals of the Heritage Committee.<sup>220</sup> This chapter will then proceed to analyze church published materials including church newsletters as well as weekly church bulletins. This body of visual culture reflects the evolution of the congregation from a predominantly African American church to a Black Christian Nationalist center undergirded by Black Liberation Theology.

In addition to outlining a visual history of this religious community, this chapter will put forth an iconographic analysis of popular imagery central to the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1's cultural aesthetic agenda. In his 2005 essay entitled, "Iconography after Identity," Kobena Mercer suggests Black Arts Movement art production initiated a "rupture" and redressing of Black identity which was extended or "follow[ed]-through" by subsequent generations of artists

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<sup>219</sup> Melanie Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett: An American Artist in Mexico*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Stacy I. Morgan, *Rethinking Social Realism: African American Art and Literature, 1930-1953*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

<sup>220</sup> Kimberly J. Brown, *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) 2-3. Synthesizing theoretical paradigms from Walter Benjamin and feminist philosophy as espoused by Audre Lorde, Brown define after-image as follows: "The afterimage as familiar distortion as at once different and familiar—"dissonant" and "polyphonic"—is a space of imagery unfolding. The time-elapsed significance of this unfolding is also a part of its force. Taking the shape of the image before it, only altered, the afterimage requires the work of the viewer in order to be decipherable. To be known... What Mary Ann Doane refers to as the 'persistence of vision,' the photographic afterimage... is also present within the visual culture of the black Atlantic and forms a layering of contingent imagery therein." This definition is instructive of framing the cultural work of the heart of the circulation of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 mural.

across the Black Atlantic.<sup>221</sup> Here, Mercer suggests a pattern in the expression of black identity across the Black Atlantic where alternative developments are reiterated through artistic means. Mercer's "rupture—follow-through" paradigm is useful in evaluating the impact of the Black Arts Movements aesthetics in the case of the legacy of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. In addition to being at the forefront of the visual rupture of the Black Arts Movement, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 and the network of churches that would comprise the Pan Africanist Orthodox Church also actualized the follow-through phase by sustaining the aesthetic and promotion of Black Art. In this way, the visual history of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 offers an opportunity to examine the development and institutionalization of Black Arts Movement aesthetic ideals in this living community that institutionalized these principles.

Kobena Mercer's aforementioned essay encourages iconographic analysis of African American art. This dissertation seriously engages this methodological perspective as it reveals new visual relationships that challenge and expand the standing historical accounts concerning the Black Arts Movement. Mercer advances art historical analysis by arguing for a reconsideration of African American iconography. He writes:

What interests me is getting to the third level of iconology where aesthetic matters of style and form are interpreted as symptoms of the deeper structures of diaspora subjectivity... The importance of reaching this level is that, from here, we can begin to analyze the imaginative connections whereby works of art talk to one another: we can enter into the dialogic networks that reconfigure what Wölfflin once called "the action of picture upon picture." My argument for the iconology of the diaspora artwork, then, addresses the necessity of interpreting the work as a document of the human imagination that exists as an object of aesthetic attention in its own right.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Kobena Mercer, "Iconography after Identity," Bailey, Baucom and Boyce, ed. *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain* (Durham: Duke University Press, in collaboration with the Institute of International Visual Arts and the African and Asian Visual Artists' Archive, 2005) 54-55.

<sup>222</sup> Mercer, 55.



This exploration of Black Art Movement iconology allows for an assessment of how visual vocabularies were invested with new meaning during the late 1960s and 1970s. Standing Black Arts Movement narratives credits collectives such as AfriCobra and Weusi for advancing Black Aesthetics toward abstraction that incorporates West and Central African motifs.<sup>223</sup> Figurative styles alongside Pan-African idioms established a formal foundation for Black Art Movement aesthetics.

The Shrine's *Black Madonna and Child* mural represents an aesthetic intervention that was a catalyst for Black Art production, locally, regionally and nationally. Vaughn orchestrated the potential artist submission which included Jon Onye Lockard's *Black Christ*. (Figure 5.2) The final selection *The Black Madonna and Child* mural launched the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as a visual cultural center that reflects the Pan-Africanist trajectory of the Black Arts Movement. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is anchored by a regenerative symbol in the black mother and child imagery in the chancel mural.

### **The Activists behind the *Black Madonna and Child* Mural**

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<sup>223</sup> Kay Brown, "The Weusi Artist," *Weusi Artists Collective. Weusi, the Movement: A Renaissance in Retrospect: April 8, 1995--June 10, 1995, Jamaica Arts Center* (Jamaica, N.Y.: Jamaica Arts Center, 1995); Michael D. Harris, "From Double Consciousness to Double Vision: The Africentric Artist," *African Arts* 27 (1994): 44-53; Michael D. Harris, "Confluences: Ile-Ife, Washington, D.C., and the TransAfrican Artist," *African Arts* 30 (1997): 34-45. Nexus Contemporary Art Center, *Africobra : The First Twenty Years* (Atlanta: Nexus Contemporary Art Center, 1990). Idioms popularized by new travel to Africa and the proliferation of literature on Africa prompted by the Afrocentricity Movement led by Molefi K. Asante as documented in African American periodicals like *Negro Digest*. Founded in the late 1960s, Weusi-Nyumna Ya Sanaa originated as a Harlem-based Black Nationalist artist collective. The organization brought together a range of religious perspective and philosophies through its diverse membership. This artist collective grew to have institutional influence during the Black Arts Movement by running an art gallery, offering art and black studies instruction in a dedicate school space. The site became a major central meeting point for African American artists. African Commune of Bad Revelent Artists or AfriCobra is a Black Arts Movement artist collective founded in 1968. Akin to Weusi, AfriCobra actively worked to develop a distinctly black aesthetic. During the 1970s, AfriCobra was dedicated to making images for black communities that elevate social and cultural concerns through visual elements of "shine" and "Kool-aid colors." Both Weusi and AfriCobra held group exhibitions at the Studio Museum of Harlem during the late 1960s and 1970s.

On March 24, 1967, the religious community that would be renamed the Shrine of the Black Madonna celebrated the completion of an inaugural art project that signaled a period of revision and redefinition. Since the purchase of the structure in the 1950s, the predominantly African American congregation worshipped and lived with a stained glass window depicting the arrival of Plymouth Colony Governor, William Bradford, on the rocky Massachusetts shore.<sup>224</sup> Bradford is represented in the foreground on a rock shore. To the left of the sitter, a ship is pictured in the middle ground. This stained glass window remains in place beneath Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child*.<sup>225</sup> The chancel mural, measuring eighteen feet tall and nine feet wide, represents the new philosophical and aesthetic concerns at the core of the Black Arts Movement in its conception, commission, execution and circulation. The mural is the result of the theological assertions of Cleage, the cultural program of the church's Heritage Committee led by cultural activist, Edward Vaughn and the artistic activism of Glanton V. Dowdell and his project assistant, General George Baker, Jr. Their collaboration in the late months of 1966 through 1967 resulted in one of the earliest icons of the Black Arts Movement, spawning communal artistic efforts that typify Black Nationalist aesthetics.

When this mural is considered alongside the chief patrons and artists, the *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural offers a material complement to the activism of the Rev. Albert Cleage, Edward Vaughn, Glanton V. Dowdell and General George Baker. This mural was created to respond to questions concerning the role of race in the history of Christianity prior to the 1970 publications of Frank Snowden Jr.'s *Blacks in Antiquity* and Yosef Ben-Jochannan's *Black Man*

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<sup>224</sup> Dillard, 288; Unidentified Photographer, *Photograph of the Shrine of the Black Madonna Sanctuary before Dowdell's Black Madonna mural installed*, before 1958, from the Albert Cleage Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This archival image house in the Rev. Cleage's papers records the original stained glass window that still remains under Glanton Dowdell's chancel mural. The full-length portrait established American patriotic associative links for the original 1920s religious community.

<sup>225</sup> Kristen Cleage, "Sermon—Advent 1966," Finding Eliza archival website, <<http://findingeliza.com/archives/20994>> (Accessed: May 19, 2016).

*of the Nile and His Family*.<sup>226</sup> Greater attention will be given to Cleage and Dowdell as they are documented and publicized as the activist behind the mural.<sup>227</sup>

By the 1960s, Cleage developed an interest in the visual arts throughout his lengthy undergraduate career. He began college at Fisk University in the 1931-1932 academic years; one year after Aaron Douglas completed his famous Cravath Library murals.<sup>228</sup> Although Cleage completed undergraduate studies over the course of thirteen years while practicing as a minister, he graduated from Oberlin College where he earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree with a major in religious education.<sup>229</sup> Cleage developed an interest in film and visual communication, during his tenure as interim pastor of Church for the Fellowship of All People in San Francisco.<sup>230</sup> Although he did not complete the program, Cleage pursued a doctoral degree in visual education in University of Southern California's Cinema Department.<sup>231</sup> His biography states, "he wanted to

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<sup>226</sup> Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970); Yosef A.A. ben-Jochannan, *Black Man of the Nile and His Family* (1970), (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1989); Yosef A.A. ben-Jochannan, *African: Mother of Western Civilization* (1971), (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1988); W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: an Inquiry into the Part which African Has Played in World History* (1947), (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

<sup>227</sup> Alex Poinsett, "Quest for Black Christ," *Ebony Magazine* (March 1969) < <https://books.google.com/books?id=JeIDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA170&dq=quest%20for%20black%20christ&pg=PA178#v=onepage&q&f=false> > (accessed: March 31, 2016).

<sup>228</sup> James Prigoff and Robin J. Dunitz, *Walls of Heritage, Walls of Pride: African American Murals* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2000) 246; Renee Ater, ed. *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). As one of the central aesthetic minds of the New Negro Renaissance in Harlem, Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) was commissioned to design a mural series for Fisk University's Cravath Library during the summer of 1929. Douglas painted the murals in the spring of 1930 with the assistance of Edwin Harleston. This mural cycle shares similarities to Douglas's mural style that reflects an interest in visualizing the historic and cultural development of black Atlantic communities.

<sup>229</sup> Pan Orthodox African Christian Church, "A Chronology of the POACC: Building a Nation Fifty Years in the Making and Still Counting," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 41, 3a, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Between 1931 and 1943, Cleage attended Fisk University, Wayne State University and Oberlin. He graduated in 1943 from Oberlin's School of Theology with a bachelor degree in divinity.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

learn how to produce films to reach the masses of Black people with his message of Social Activism.”<sup>232</sup>

Cleage’s interest in visual culture and Christian education developed during the popularity of “race films” that often featured African American religious subject matter. As early as the 1930s, white Hollywood directors incorporated essentialized views of African American institutions like the black church in popular movies such as Warner Brothers’ *The Green Pastures* (1936).<sup>233</sup> Several movies directed by African Americans, featuring all-African American casts, were released in wide distribution during the 1940s through the 1950s.<sup>234</sup> Film scholar Judith Weisenfeld explains the impact of these films as follows:

Spencer Williams, along with a few other African American filmmakers in this period, made and exhibited films with the explicit intention of producing religious affect in their viewers and motivating transformation within the context of Christian values... These religious films took a variety of aesthetic approaches to cultivating Christian character and experience and, examined in the context of broader discourse about the relationship between religion and popular culture, illuminate some of the ways film helped propagate black religious thought and shape black church culture.<sup>235</sup>

This era may have prompted Cleage to consider how new technologies could visualize a religious paradigm, specifically an African American one. Cleage left California in the late 1940s, disillusioned by his experience at the Church for the Fellowship of All People.<sup>236</sup> The Rev. Cleage was also equipped with a new language of visual communication that would frame his art activities of the 1960s.

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Judith Weisenfeld, “Introduction,” *African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 6.

<sup>234</sup> Spencer Williams’ *The Blood of Jesus* (1941) is an example of the religious race films from the 1940s.

<sup>235</sup> Weisenfeld, “ ‘A Mighty Epic of Modern Morals’: Black-Audience Religious Films,” *African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 89-90.

<sup>236</sup> Pan Orthodox African Christian Church, “A Chronology of the POACC: Building a Nation Fifty Years in the Making and Still Counting,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers.

The Rev. Albert Cleage was an influential actor in defining the demands of Black Nationalism. As cofounder and contributing editor of the bi-weekly newsletter *The Illustrated News*, Cleage consistently articulated the needs of this emerging movement.<sup>237</sup> For example, in a 1964 feature article entitled, “Thinking Black,” Cleage outlines the lessons Detroit’s Black Nationalists learned from labor activism:

The most important thing that’s happening in Detroit is the shifting emphasis in the FREEDOM STRUGGLE from “integration” to “separation”...Twenty million Negroes could be powerful in America. We are not powerful because we have been spending our time and energy trying to persuade the white man to accept us and to give us our Freedom. This has been our weakness. We have been tricked into ‘Thinking White’ inside of a black skin. We have not understood the simple fact that we must think black, vote black and buy black if we are to be free...The old myth that the Negro’s best interests lie with organized labor has been exploded.<sup>238</sup>

Perhaps influenced by the work of psychiatrist and radical philosopher Frantz Fanon, which brought attention to the psychological effects of colonial oppression, Cleage encourages a reconsideration and revision of cognitive paradigms in order to achieve liberation.<sup>239</sup> Through sermons, editorials and cultural activities at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, the Rev. Albert Cleage helped establish the philosophical tenets of the black power movement. Moreover, The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 evolved into a space that materially communicates a Christian brand of Black Nationalism.

One of Cleage’s contributions to the Black Nationalist agenda is his promoting a criticality toward Christian visual culture as well as representations of African Americans. Pastor Cleage outlined the potential trajectory for Black Christian Nationalist iconography in the sermon

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<sup>237</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007) 252. *The Illustrated News* ran from 1962 to 1965.

<sup>238</sup> Cleage, “Thinking Black,” *The Illustrated News*, 3 Feb 1964, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 6, Folder 10, 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>239</sup> Frantz Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952), (New York: Grove, 2008) 89-119.

delivered at the mural's unveiling. Cleage then uses Dowdell's mural as a point of departure for describing the visual potency of representing black Christian icons. Cleage offers this interpretive description:

On either side of the Black Madonna, I would like to see a picture of Jesus, done by a black artist. I would like one to be of the Crucifixion with the white Romans at the feet of the Black Messiah, the jeers and mockery upon their faces and the hatred in their eyes. Only a black artist could paint that picture. On the other side, I would like to see a picture of Jesus driving the money changers out of the Temple, a powerful black man supplanting the weak little mambypamby white Jesus. The money changers would be depicted just as they were, Uncle Toms, exploiting their own people with the connivance and support of the white Gentile oppressors.<sup>240</sup>

Reinforcing the act of envisioning and materializing empowering images, Cleage illustrates the critical nature required when encountering popular images of African Americans and popular images created by and for the white Christian establishment.

Scholars of African American religion recognize the 1960s as a period of redefinition for the Black Church that resulted in the birth of Black Liberation Theology. Moving beyond the sociological difference to address doctrine and practice, Black Liberation Theology aims to critique white supremacist assumptions and histories inherent in American Christianity.<sup>241</sup>

Whereas academicians like James Cones constructed the theological precepts of Black Liberation Theology, the Rev. Albert Cleage was a pioneer in establishing the practical application of Black Liberation Theology.<sup>242</sup> Cone, a systematic theologian who pioneered the academic discourse on Black Liberation Theology, recognizes Cleage as using Black power to “reorient the church-community” in the 1969 text *Black Theology & Black Power*. The following year, Cone again

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<sup>240</sup> Cleage “The Resurrection of the Nation,” *The Black Messiah*, 86.

<sup>241</sup> James Cone, “Foundational Voices before 1980: Introduction,” *Black Theology: a Documentary History, Volume One, 1966-1979*, James Cones and Gayraud Wilmore, eds. (New York: Orbis Books, 1993) 89-88.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

directs attention to Cleage's critiques in *A Black Theology of Liberation*.<sup>243</sup> In addition to questioning aspects of racist assumptions invested in American Christianity, the Rev. Cleage also hosted several black church conferences at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 that brought together the leading figures defining Black Liberation Theology. For example, James H. Cone and Vincent Harding participated in conferences at the church during the late 1970s.<sup>244</sup>

While Pastor Cleage's exposure to the visual vocabularies of fine arts and film provided the foundation, the leadership of Edward Vaughn was the organizing force behind the commission. Vaughn orchestrated the media campaign to ensure broad visibility for the *Black Madonna and Child* mural. Vaughn was a Fisk graduate who settled in Detroit after military service.<sup>245</sup> He went on to establish Vaughn's Bookstore in 1962, earning the historic role of being Detroit's first black-owned bookstore.<sup>246</sup> Vaughn recalls a Black Nationalist landscape anchored by the Shrine of the Black Madonna and Vaughn's Bookstore.<sup>247</sup> These spaces in effect served

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<sup>243</sup> James Cone, "Jesus Christ in Black Theology," *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), (New York: Orbis Book, 120. Imploring for serious consideration of the Rev. Cleage's insights, Cones asserts: "Black theology must show that the Reverend Albert Cleage's description of Jesus as the Black Messiah is not the product of a mind 'distorted' by its own oppressed condition, but is rather the most meaningful Christological statement in our time. Any other statement about Jesus Christ is at best irrelevant and at worst blasphemous." Here, Cone offers a strong endorsement of Cleage's perspectives, revealing that Black Liberation Theology emanates from the both academic and liturgical spaces.

<sup>244</sup> Dr. Vincent Harding was a historian and civil rights activist. He was a colleague and close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is the author of number books including *African American Christianity: Essays in History* and *Martin Luther King: the Inconvenient Hero*.

<sup>245</sup> "State Representative Edward Vaughn, Biography," *House Biographical Sketches*, <<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/Publications/manual/1999-2000/1999-mm-0289-0289-vaughn.pdf>> (accessed: June 2, 2016).

<sup>246</sup> Sam Pollard, interview with Edward Vaughn, 6 Jun 1989, *Eyes on the Prize Interviews*, as republished by Washington University Digital Gateway Texts <<http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eii/eiiweb/vau5427.0309.166edvaughn.html>> (Accessed: May 19, 2016)

<sup>247</sup> Sam Pollard, interview with Edward Vaughn, 6 June 1989. Edward Vaughn remembered his business in this passage from a 1993 interview: "We were mainly oriented toward the people who already were Pan-Africanists and Nationalists or people who were on the left in, in the movement, and they, they came to the store, and soon school teachers, and children began to come. There was sort of an awakening in the community from New York, we were hearing about things happening there. I sold a, a magazine called "The Liberator", and so the consciousness was being developed and of course "Mohammed Speaks" and those things were happening then, so there was a consciousness that was being raised throughout the community... We had the Afro-American Broadcasting Company which was broadcasting every Saturday

as main thoroughfares of Black Nationalist literature. Vaughn's membership and leadership at the Shrine of the Black Madonna solidified a cultural coalition that would encourage black artistic production. Membership records indicate that both Vaughn and the artist, Glanton Dowdell, were members of the Shrine of the Black Madonna by 1967.<sup>248</sup> It is also important to note that both the Shrine of the Black Madonna and Vaughn's Bookstore were spared damage during the 1967 Detroit Rebellion.<sup>249</sup>

In November 1966, Pastor Cleage called for the formation of the Heritage Committee dedicated to addressing "a need to recapture, record and relate the history and culture of black people in a positive manner."<sup>250</sup> In the 1968 draft of the membership text, *Welcome to the Black Nation!: A Guide for Members of Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna* the authors cite the Black Madonna chancel mural project as the inaugural task of the committee as follows:

Therefore the Heritage Committee has embarked on the noble task of setting the record straight. That is showing the real meaning of our religion. Our first project was to commission a black artist to paint a picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus—our Black Madonna. We have also placed pictures of famous black heroes in the Fellowship Hall and Nursery.<sup>251</sup>

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on WGPR, broadcasting the speeches of Malcolm X practically every Saturday, we had the "Illustrated News" newspaper which the Cleage brothers put out, Albert and Henry. The Henry brothers were working with a, a group called GOAL, and they also were responsible for the Afro-American Broadcasting System. Central Congregational Church, pastored by Albert Cleage, was beginning to, to make some movement in this particular area."

<sup>248</sup> "Prospective Members: Third Sunday, August 1967" the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 7, Folder 16, 9, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This documents records the Dowdell family (the artist, his wife and five children) establishing membership ties to the church in the fall of 1967, after the unveiling. The duration of Dowdell's membership was short-lived as he expatriated to Sweden by 1970s.

<sup>249</sup> Sam Pollard, interview with Edward Vaughn, 6 Jun 1989,

<sup>250</sup> Edward Vaughn et al., *Welcome to the Black Nation!: A Guide for Members of Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna*, 3.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.



This radical declaration situates this mural in a larger art historical discourse concerning the denial of African presence in Western Christian art. Furthermore, this mural commission offered an example of African Americans participating as a communal body in the art production process. The Rev. Cleage and Vaughn turned to a member of the local community of artists-activists to execute this art commission and visualize new assertions concerning the Black Madonna and Christ.

Detroit-born artist-activist, Glanton V. Dowdell secured the commission to paint the large scale chancel mural in the Shrine of the Black Madonna sanctuary at the age of 44.<sup>252</sup> Dowdell credited his grandmother with sharing her artistic talent with him in his elementary years.<sup>253</sup> In earliest accounts of his teenage years, he recalls, “When I was 16, I was sent to reform school for armed robbery. I was in the low income bracket and full of the devil.”<sup>254</sup> Following his time in reform school, Dowdell pursued art education in Detroit and Chicago. The artist consistently stated he attended the Society of Arts and Crafts (Detroit) in 1943 and the Chicago Art Institute in 1944.<sup>255</sup> By 1949, Dowdell began serving a twelve year and ten month sentence in Michigan’s Jackson State Prison for second degree murder.<sup>256</sup> Newspaper reports described this crime as stemming from “a slaying growing out of a street argument.”<sup>257</sup> While incarcerated, Glanton

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<sup>252</sup> “Prisoner Painter Teaches Art to Fellow Inmates” Unidentified Publication, n.d., Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 8: 515, and Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>253</sup> “Negro Painter Wears Away in Prison,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept 22 1956, Black Power Movement Collection, and Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 8: 515, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>254</sup> “Prisoner Painter Teaches Art to Fellow Inmates” Unidentified Publication, n.d., Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 8: 515, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>255</sup> “Negro Painter Wears Away in Prison,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept 22 1956.

<sup>256</sup> “Prisoner Painter Teaches Art to Fellow Inmates” Unidentified Publication, n.d.

<sup>257</sup> “2 Get Probation in Gun Arrests” *Detroit Free Press*, 5 Sept 1967, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

Dowdell advanced and refined his skills in oil painting and gained a critical clarity that led him toward activism upon his release in 1962.<sup>258</sup>

Dowdell painted regularly in his cell and emerged as an art instructor for fellow inmates while in prison.<sup>259</sup> Dowdell earned honorable mention in the 1958 state-wide Michigan Artists Show for one of his two accepted submissions, *Southeast Corner of My Cell*.<sup>260</sup> When asked about this artwork during an interview, Dowdell offered this interpretation of this “somber, gray” painting: “That picture was probably the most damaging indictment of prison life that ever went out of [that prison]...The critics fully understood the message of futility.”<sup>261</sup> Dowdell was directly influenced by his experience and the growing critique of penal institutions. Lee Bernstein suggests prison conditions and reform were consistently before the American public between 1951 and 1953 as prison rebellions reached an all-time high.<sup>262</sup> In December of 1959, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reviewed a one-man show at Grand River Art Gallery featuring Dowdell in an article entitled, “Glanton Dowdell...Artist and Ten-Year Prisoner!” This exhibition included almost thirty-five paintings, all housed in private collections.<sup>263</sup> Journalist Joe Strickland offers a thorough description of Dowdell’s stylistic ability in cubist, figurative and expressionistic painting.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> “Negro Painter Wears Away in Prison,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept 22 1956.

<sup>260</sup> Joe Strickland “Glanton Dowdell...Artists and Ten-Year Prisoner,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Dec 1959, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers.; Ellen Goodman, “Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes,” *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>261</sup> Goodman, “Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes” *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967.

<sup>262</sup> Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison: Arts and Politics in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 14.

<sup>263</sup> Strickland, “Glanton Dowdell...Artists and Ten-Year Prisoner,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Dec 1959, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. He also observed that Dowdell demonstrated mastery in symbolism and design with respect to the construction of space through perspective and symmetry.

These statements by the artist are important as they provide insight into this oeuvre despite the limited availability of Dowdell's art today. Strickland discusses a painting of a lynching scene that confirms Dowdell's familiarity with visual modes of protest in African American art such as lynching iconography. Strickland notes, "In one painting he depicts a lynching. Here, he could, but does not, make the picture contents gory and brutal. But Dowdell intricately displays the stark, bare tree; on it hangs a man; a little boy has climbed the tree to cut the rope, two black figures stand below holding a sheet to catch the body. By the tree is a cluster of three people, perhaps a mother, wife and child their heads bowed in sorrow."<sup>265</sup> Although no illustration was included, this description reveals the artist's interest in mother and child, as a minor motif in his work.<sup>266</sup> In the context of the terror African Americans experienced in the Jim Crow South, best exemplified in the publicity around the murder of Emmett Till, Dowdell's lynching painting indicates his awareness of the critical potential of painting to convey social protest well as iconography as social critique.<sup>267</sup> During incarceration, Dowdell's engagement with art was primarily through publications and the art produced by his artists-students.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Glanton Dowdell developed a visual vocabulary that employed figuration and explorations in color and value as a means to critically engage and address the human condition and African American identity. As this quotation from Strickland's article indicates, ideas concerning visual expression and social consciousness coalesced during the 1950s for Dowdell:

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Despite the inclusion of multiple figures, Dowdell's painting also recalls stoic nature of panel 15 of Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series: There Were Lynchings* (1940-1941).

<sup>267</sup> Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy, *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008); "National Report: Chicago Boy, 14, Kidnapped by Miss. Whites," *Jet Magazine*, 8 Sept 1955. On August 28, 1955, Emmett Till (1941-1955) was lynched and murdered by a mob for whistling at a white woman. This incident as a watershed moment in the modern civil rights movement as it initiated and accelerated the use of visual representation as a weapon.

The artist as a mutation on the social body has no will. His function is to absorb, synthesize and eject. The compulsion to place within the range of perception of the heretofore unperceived is almost libidinal in nature—the ultimate purpose of which is to further the evolutionary process...I think each man having suffered long is entitled to a message to future generations. My function then is to send that message. Perhaps I remember too well the prayers of a nine-year-old boy who looked at empty skies and begged, “Help us, please, God, sir.”<sup>268</sup>

This is one of the few written accounts of Dowdell articulating his artistic philosophy. Following his release from prison in 1962, Glanton Dowdell contributed his art and social activist skills toward causes targeted at Black workers in Detroit. By 1966, Glanton Dowdell was listed as a member of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers and received the Trade Union Leadership Council Award for Excellence in Art.<sup>269</sup> He also opened his own art exhibition space, the Easel Gallery, during this year.<sup>270</sup>

In the fall of 1966, Dowdell and fellow activist General George Baker, were stopped by police near the site of the Kercheval Incident—the three day racial disturbance.<sup>271</sup> This traffic stop was informed by a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) tip, as local Detroit activists were intensely surveilled by the local police as well as the FBI.<sup>272</sup> Baker and Dowdell were arrested for concealing several weapons, including a loaded 1.45 caliber Colt automatic pistol.<sup>273</sup> After further investigation, police accused Dowdell and Baker of having a role in the Kercheval Incident.<sup>274</sup>

These types of incidents were later recalled by the media as precedents for the 1967 summer riots

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid. The pair was leaving the headquarters of the Afro-American Youth Movement.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> “2 Get Probation in Gun Arrests” *Detroit Free Press*, 5 Sept 1967, , Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>271</sup> Richard Bragaw, “2 in Kercheval Race Case Get 5-Year Probation Terms” *Detroit Free Press*, 6 Sept 1967, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>272</sup> Surveillance information compiled by the Detroit Police and FBI surveillance is archived in the Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

in Detroit. In fact, during the 1967 Rebellion, not only was Dowdell shot several times but his Easel Gallery was destroyed by police.<sup>275</sup> While awaiting sentencing, Dowdell began the *Black Madonna* mural with General George Baker as his assistant. Between 1966 and 1968, the Rev. Cleage and Dowdell enjoyed “a short-lived alliance” in activism at the Shrine of the Black Madonna.<sup>276</sup>

Both Dowdell and Baker are documented as being integral to Detroit’s radical labor movement. Baker was heavily involved in the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a co-founder of UHURU and maintained a leadership role in leading factory strikes.<sup>277</sup> In 1965, Baker published his letter to the draft board refusing service in *SOULBOOK, II*. His tone reflects the his activist determination in contentious passages such as this: “You want me to defend the riches reaped from the super-exploitation of the darker races of mankind by a few white rich super monopolist who control the most vast empire that has ever existed in man’s one million years of History—all in the name of ‘Freedom’! Why, here in the heart of American, 22 million black people are suffering unsurmounted toil: exploited economically by every form of business...”<sup>278</sup>

After receiving probation for the 1966 concealed armed conviction, Baker organized a wildcat

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<sup>275</sup> Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit : I Do Mind Dying* (1975), (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 121.

<sup>276</sup> Georgakas and Surkin, 193; “Citywide Community Action Committee (CCAC) Flyer,” not dated, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 8: 515, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection. For example, Cleage and Dowdell were elected co- chairs of Citywide Citizen Action Committee.

<sup>277</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007) 10, 264. Muhammad Ahmad, *History of RAM, Revolutionary Action Movement*, independently published, 1978. Revolutionary Action Movement was founded by a group of students and black activists who were meeting in a study group to explore Black Nationalism. Although the study group was meeting during the latter months of 1962, the group became RAM in January 1963. “RAM was committed to “using mass direct action combined with the tactics of self-defense, [RAM] hoped to change the civil right movement into a black revolution.”UHURU was one of the earliest organizations founded in 1963 by four men including General George Baker. This organization, which boasted an exclusively black membership, was formed with a dedication to Black Nationalism. Dillard notes that UHURU denounced nonviolence strategies and encouraged a third world revolution rooted in socialist principles.

<sup>278</sup> General George G. Baker, Jr. “Letter to Draft Board 100,” Bracey, Meier and Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America*, 507.

strike and circulated an open letter to the Chrysler Corporation after he was fired.<sup>279</sup> There is no record of artistic production from Baker beyond his assistance with the *Black Madonna and Child* mural.

After Dowdell and Baker were sentenced to five years' probation for the Kercheval Race Incident, the Detroit Police and FBI intensified their observation of black activists. The FBI maintained detailed yet biased records of events held at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 including the Black Arts Conferences of 1966 and 1967.<sup>280</sup> A February 1968 Detroit Police Memorandum listed the automobile information for the Rev. Cleage, Glanton V. Dowdell and General George Baker.<sup>281</sup> By the summer of 1968, the Detroit Police monitored Dowdell's home and movement as an aspect of the investigation of the upcoming Poor People's March in Washington, DC.<sup>282</sup> Detroit Police documents from 1969 offered a concise physical description of Baker and his organizational affiliations which included the Black Art Development Center where DRUM meetings were convened.<sup>283</sup> These departmental memorandum also expands the variety of uses Black Arts Movement spaces served in cultivating a range of expressions of black radical thought.

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<sup>279</sup> General George Baker, "Open Letter to Chrysler Corporation," *Detroit: I do Mind Dying* (1975), Georgakas and Surkin, eds., (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012) 27-28.

<sup>280</sup> Committee on Government Operations, United States Senate, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders. hearings before the United States Senate Committee on Government Operations, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Ninetieth Congress, second session, on Mar. 21, 22, 1968. Part 6.* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1968) <[<sup>281</sup> Detroit Police Department, "Confidential: Detroit Police Department, Interoffice Memorandum, 2/16/1968" Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection. This list also included activists, Grace Lee Boggs and Henry Milton.](http://congressional.proquest.com/congcomp/getdoc?HEARING-ID=HRG-1968-OPS-0006>1416-1419</a>>(Accessed: May5, 2016).</p>
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<sup>282</sup> Detroit Police Department, "Surveillance on Buses for the Poor People's March, 06/15/1968" Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

<sup>283</sup> "Baker, Hamlin Marsh Detroit Police Department Memo, 4-13-1969," Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

*Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* offers a characterization of Glanton V. Dowdell, in the years before and after the completion of the mural. In this labor history account, Dowdell is described with these words:

He has fled the United States after being charged with forging \$65,000 worth of government bonds. One of his co-defendants had been murdered in Detroit, others had pleaded guilty, and there had been attempts on Dowdell's life. Like Malcolm X, Martin Sostre and Elridge Cleaver, Dowdell had a criminal background. His specialty had been armed robbery, and much of his political career involved being in charge of security. Dowdell was also a gifted artist and an articulate politicians. In the mid-1960s, he had taken part in a variety of united front activities which had generated funds for radical activities. . . Dowdell had been active in physically removing drug pushers from around some black high schools, and he was rumored to have been the inspiration for the armed robbers who preyed on after hours clubs owned by the mafia and black racketeers.<sup>284</sup>

This characterization portrays the artist as committed to institutionally and physically reforming African Americans environments during the 1960s. Here, Glanton Dowdell is heroically hailed as a renegade leader in Detroit who is propelled to international activism as a political refugee.

Dowdell fled the U.S. for Stockholm, Sweden where he lived the remainder of his life with his family as an activist working toward the mission of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers until 2000 when he died at the age of 77.<sup>285</sup> The minds behind the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1's chancel mural reflected the interest of this evolving Black Nationalist community. Cleage, Dowdell, Vaughn and Baker are recorded in the archives as male activists grafting symbolic meaning onto the Black female body. Perhaps alternative oral histories, yet to be captured, will reveal the role women played in defining the iconography as well as the reception of the mural among black female activist and feminists.

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<sup>284</sup> Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 121.

<sup>285</sup> "Sweden Rejects U.S. Bid to Return Accused Black," *Jet Magazine*, 1 Jul 1971, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=qDcDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA5&dq=glanton%20dowdell&pg=PA4#v=onepage&q=glanton%20dowdell&f=false>> (Accessed: December 10, 2015); "Glanton V. Dowdell, August 9 1923-January 19, 2000, Memorial Program," Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 8: 515, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection.

The *Black Madonna and Child* mural exists today as one of the early Black Arts Movements events and monuments that christened the church as a site dedicated to the aims of fighting black oppression. (Figure 5. 1) The mural represents the ways in which the Black Arts Movement, Black Liberation Theology and other protest traditions coalesced to initiate a mural movement that would broadcast the ideologies of the Black Nationalism. The *Black Madonna and Child* mural conveys the idea of nation-building in the third stanza of “The Black Christian Nationalist Creed,”: “I believe that the revolutionary spirit of God, embodied in the Black Messiah, is born anew in each generation...”<sup>286</sup> In this instance, African American Madonna and Child iconography is employed to represent the cultural resistance and survival, in the face of oppressive social conditions.

#### **Black Madonna and Child as an Early Black Arts Movement Icon & Catalyst**

Glanton Dowdell’s figurative style, design prowess and ideological commitment made him an ideal candidate to advance Cleage’s theological positions and Vaughn’s cultural activism. Examples of Dowdell’s artistic production during his incarceration record his explorations in portraiture and Negro types. (Figure 5. 4) The detail of an untitled composition described in the article as a “representation of an Arab woman” seems to be consistent with the tradition of Negro types promoted by African American artists and art historians such as James A. Porter.<sup>287</sup> (Figure 5. 5) In addition to generalized pseudo-anthropological titles, these compositions use traditional Western quarter-length portraiture as a study and affirmation of the human condition. Dowdell’s

<sup>286</sup> Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church*, xiv.

<sup>287</sup> Krista A. Thompson, "A Sidelong Glance: The Practice of African Diaspora Art History in the United States," *Art Journal* 70 (fall 2011): 6-31; David Driskell, "Introduction," *Modern Negro Art* (1943) (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992). James A. Porter (1905-1970) is recognized as one of the earliest scholar-artists to author a comprehensive history of African American art, from colonial period to the 1940 Modern Art period. Porter spent the greater portion of his career teaching art studio and art history courses at Howard University following a teaching appointment in 1927. He also served as chair of Howard Art Department as well as director of the Howard University Art Gallery. He earned a Master of Arts in Art History from New York University.



painting also suggests the black female figure served as an iconic symbol across his oeuvre. Finally, this image is evidence of Dowdell refining the formal characteristics, such as color and tonal value that come to define the Shrine's chancel mural.

*The Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural depicts the divine mother and child pair as monumental icons defined by dark tones and interlocking forms. The Madonna's direct gaze is one of the most striking aspects of the mural. (Figure 5. 6) The Madonna stands on the light grey and tan stones, with her feet hidden under her layers of white and blue garments. (Figure 5. 7) Perhaps visually referencing the Western images of Mary and Christ, the pair subverts naturalism by not casting a shadow on the rocks, so as to articulate divine status. The Madonna dons a lavender fabric across her torso and a blue cloak. The hues of her clothing repeat the tonal gradation of the sky. The aerial component of the mural recalls Aaron Douglas's signature design strategy of communicating light through subtle value change that are emphasized through line. Instead of a circular halo as a symbol of divine light, Dowdell constructed a triangular frame of blue tones that lead the eye from the rounded arch molding of the niche to the covered head of the Madonna.

The artist employed horizontal lines to articulate the recession of space in the mural. The Madonna's garment creates a diagonal implied line that directs the eye to a cityscape rendered in black. The varied line of the city complements the horizontal line of the rocky shore.<sup>288</sup> The Black Madonna and Black Messiah are visually linked to The Black Nation through chromatic unity. Thus, the color black establishes the conceptual and compositional foundation of this mural.

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<sup>288</sup> Paul Lee, "Ed Vaughn on Detroit's Famous Black Madonna Chancel Mural," <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg>> (Accessed May2, 2016). In the 2013 interview of Edward Vaughn, Vaughn states that the cityscape was outlined in orange contour lines to represent churches on fire. Vaughn states that Dowdell said the illuminated cityscape represented how black churches were historically terrorized by arson. This element was not visible during my site visit, nor is it captured in any reproduction of the mural.

Black takes on symbolic and ideological significance in this chancel mural during the same time that artists such as Roy DeCarava and Faith Ringgold are examining the potential of black in the emerging Black Aesthetic.<sup>289</sup>

The Black Christ-child is represented in profile. He is highlighted by the golden swaddling cloth which serves as a chromatic reference to the halo that distinguishes divinity. The infant is protected by his mother's embrace. (Figure 5. 8) Perhaps somewhat unrealistically, the Madonna's hands create an implied circle in supporting the newborn Christ's lower body, as opposed to his neck. The Black Messiah is positioned in an upright position akin to the fetal position, with his head slightly bent forward. This representation of Christ broadcasts Christ's humanity and the nascent stage of the Black Nation. By conveying the Black Messiah as a newborn infant, prior to his revolutionary identity, this mural constantly reminds the congregation and viewers of the regenerative continuity of the Black Nation. The placement of the Black Messiah in the foreground, mediated by the Madonna's arms, spatially articulates the proselytization facet of this mural which intends to bring the viewer to the Black Nation through the Black Messiah.

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<sup>289</sup> Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955). Roy DeCarava, *Thru Black Eyes*, (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1968).; Faith Ringgold,, Michele Wallace, et al., *American People, Black Light: Faith Ringgold's Paintings of the 1960s* (Purchase: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2010); Lisa E. Farrington and Faith Ringgold, *Faith Ringgold*, (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2004) 33. As early as the 1950s, Roy Decarava experiments and becomes a master of centrally situating dark tones in his photographic practice. This point is illustrated throughout the untitled photographs that accompany Langton Hughes's texts in *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. Faith Ringgold systematically examines the color black in her *Black Light Series*, which she executed between 1967 and 1969. According to art historian Lisa Farrington, "Through *The Black Light Series*, Ringgold investigated ways in which to use black pigment as a metaphor for race, or as she said, as 'a way of expressing on canvas the new "black is beautiful" sense of ourselves" In this series, Ringgold extended her college research into color by replacing the chiaroscuro method of using white pigment to create 'light' with a system that utilized black pigment to the same end." Examples from *The Black Light Series* include: *Man* (1967, oil on canvas, Collection of the Artist) and *The American Spectrum* (1969, oil on canvas, Chase Manhattan Bank Collection).

As early as 1962, Black Arts Movement poet Harold G. Lawrence penned a poem entitled “Black Madonna” that offers philosophical and visual cues for Dowdell’s rendering of the Madonna in the chancel mural.<sup>290</sup> (Figure 5. 9) In the first stanza, Lawrence describes the Madonna as an “apparition” emerging from the “Rocks of Rhodesia, Kush Ethiopia.”<sup>291</sup> This corresponds with the *Black Madonna*’s monumental scale as well as her positioning on a rocky coast. Following a stanza lamenting how Renaissance masters “wiped [Mary] white,” the poem concludes with the a passage that describes the black Madonna as an upright figure that bears the chromatic complexity of the color black:

Now again we sense your  
 Sensitive beauty, smiling, black  
 Turban crowned, robed, straight backed,  
 Very black—and brown and beige too  
 Sing strong songs of Negritude  
 Through coffee lips your vibrant blues.<sup>292</sup>

Lawrence’s poem was accompanied by an illustration of a Black Madonna by Detroit muralist and illustrator, LeRoy Foster.<sup>293</sup> Foster’s shrouded Madonna bears full lips and straightened hair.

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<sup>290</sup> Poet and activist Harold G. Lawrence (1928-1989) would later change his name to Kofi Wangara. In 1962, Wangara’s article on pre-Columbian African exploration in the New World was published in *The Crisis Magazine*. Wangara was revered as a pioneering historian and educator in Detroit and throughout the Midwestern United States. < <http://umichbsu-blog.tumblr.com/post/3472045969/harun-kofi-wangara-formerly-known-as-harold-glyn>> (accessed: March 19, 2016)

<sup>291</sup> Harold G. Lawrence, “Untitled (Black Madonna),” *Negro Digest* (June 1962): 52.  
 <<https://books.google.com/books?id=WfMDAAAAMBAAJ&lpg=PA97&dq=harold%20G.%20Lawrence%20madonna&pg=PA53#v=twopage&q&f=false>> (Accessed: April 24, 2016).

<sup>292</sup> Harold G. Lawrence, “Untitled (Black Madonna)” *Negro Digest*, June 1962,  
 <<https://books.google.com/books?id=WfMDAAAAMBAAJ&lpg=PA97&dq=harold%20G.%20Lawrence%20madonna&pg=PA53#v=twopage&q&f=false>> (accessed: May 23, 2016).

<sup>293</sup> James Prigoff and Robin J. Dunitz, *Walls of Heritage, Walls of Pride: African American Murals*, (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2000).; Alma Forest Parks, “A City Survey: the Arts in Detroit” *Negro Digest*, Nov 1962,  
 <<https://books.google.com/books?id=WToDAAAAMBAAJ&pg=PA88&lpg=PA88&dq=negro+digest+LeRoy+Foster&source=bl&ots=WZS8Oj85jI&sig=sB952dOcallu1RpnS5jOi0Ftswk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiZ3c->

Instead of saturated tones to convey racial identity, Foster reserves shadow for modeling and conveying volume. Diverging from Foster's approach, Dowdell seems to draft his composition according to the chromatic spirit of Negritude by investing cultural symbolism in black Madonna iconography.

The aesthetic development of color and value at the foundation of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural is evident in the design stages. A photograph of a sketch aptly titled "The Spacial Face of God Memory (in crude replica)" is included among the archival photographs of Dowdell painting the mural in the Albert Cleage Papers.<sup>294</sup> The author of this document is not indicated on the object or in the record. In this annotated drawing, the divine is visually represented by a dark human, mask-like face that is bilaterally organized as a site of thought and a site of communication.<sup>295</sup> The upper portion of the form is described in terms of light and space. The handwritten commentary states, "a front light was physically visible more in the upper part of space...being God's consciousness—energy concentrations."<sup>296</sup> In the chancel mural, the "front light" is conveyed though the faint placement of white-light, blue pigment. In the drawing, an arrow points at where the mouth would be located. The text describes the area as a "...space

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[shOnNAhUGHD4KHclvBo0Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=negro%20digest%20LeRoy%20Foster&f=false](http://shOnNAhUGHD4KHclvBo0Q6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=negro%20digest%20LeRoy%20Foster&f=false) (accessed: May 22, 2016). LeRoy Foster was a popular African American painter and illustrator, practicing in Detroit during the second half of the twentieth century. He attended the Society for Arts and Crafts. As early as 1962, *The Negro Digest* recognized Foster alongside Hughie-Lee Smith as one of Detroit leading African American artists. Foster was an integral figure in the development of a black arts community in Detroit as evidenced by his founding membership in Contemporary Arts Studio, one of the early spaces dedicated to fostering and exhibition art by African Americans. Foster's art was exhibited in both Michigan's statewide annuals art exhibiting as well as black artists' shows at the Detroit Art Institute of 1969 and the early 1970s. In 1971, he completed his mural *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* for the Detroit Public Murals Program. That same year, his drawing of a young black boy was used as a frontispiece for Gwendolyn Brooks's Broadside Press publication, *Aloneness*.

<sup>294</sup> Unidentified artist/author. "The Spacial Face of God Memory(in crude replica)", n.d., from the Albert Cleage Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This unattributed sketch indicated that the Rev. Cleage and his religious community rigorously explored experimental forms of descriptively render God. This diagram adds symbolic emphasis to Dowdell's mural as it shares an interest in value.

<sup>295</sup> "The Spacial Face of God Memory," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

vacuum when it was 12 blocks in circumference manifesting as God's soul consciousness."<sup>297</sup>

Soul consciousness is described as a space vacuum, or an infinite void. Investing new spiritual connotations into the color black, this document demonstrates the consideration given to how space and value facilitates the religious experience. Moreover, this systematic rendering of God is one of the most profound and overlooked spiritual and aesthetic contributions of this religious community. This document attest to a tradition of art intended to advance spiritual objectives.

The aforementioned archival sketch corresponds with the design structure of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural. Dowdell renders the Madonna's mouth as the deepest shade of black, highlighted by the lighter tones. The eyes separate the seat of intellect and the site of communication. In the sketch, one arrow directs the viewer to the eyes and an additional arrow leads the viewer's attention to the space between the eyes where the invisible "third eye" is referenced.<sup>298</sup> These points of vision and perception are used as an opportunity to address facial distinctions of the Divine: "The features of God were visible as lighted outlines of contrast within black physical space vacume's [sic] beginning of soul-consciousness manifestation."<sup>299</sup> This document explicitly states how light and tonal contrast functions to convey God as a figure of infinite consciousness. The Black Madonna's eyes, illuminated at the brow and perimeters, are conveyed as deep void spaces that correspond to the description on the archival design. Although this document was never published, it demonstrates artistic labor of theorizing the relationship between the color black and the divine that was occurring at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 in the years surrounding the mural's completion.

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Diana Cooper and Kathy Crosswell, "The Third Eye Chakra," *Ascension Through Orbs* (Forres: Findhorn Press, 2009) 74. This source defines the third eye as a center of enlightenment, located between the eyes.

<sup>299</sup> "The Spacial Face of God Memory," the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

“The Spacial Face of God Memory (in crude replica)” also reflects a contemporary interest of modern art in visually flattening or condensing volume. Modernist aesthetics were promoted in some of the earliest African American Art publications by Alain Locke and James A. Porter.<sup>300</sup> During the early 1920s, Alain Locke as well as Albert Barnes, actively encouraged Negro artists to formulate a modern aesthetic as informed by “traditional” African art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>301</sup> One must consider that the artist Dowdell was exposed to early African American historiography during his time in Chicago and perhaps even during incarceration.

The abstracted modernist aesthetic Locke sought to cultivate among Negro artists in his highly circulated publication is visually illustrated in his 1940 book *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art*. The modernist aesthetic centered on the tension in dimensionality created by the planes and textural patterns seen across the African artworks in this pictorial essay. *The Negro in Art* confirms that African American artists, akin to Modernist masters, were full engaged in employing African forms to devise Modern design

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<sup>300</sup> Cleage, “The Resurrection of the Nation,” *The Black Messiah*, 94. In *Black Messiah*, Cleage discussed his attention to Harlem Renaissance publication such as *The Crisis Magazine*.

<sup>301</sup> Christa Clarke and Arthur P. Bourgeois, *African Art in the Barnes Foundation: The Triumph of L'Art Nègre and the Harlem Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Barnes Foundation in association with Skira Rizzolo, 2015) 54-55; Alain Locke, and Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York: Garland Publications, 1983). Alain Locke (1885-1954) is widely accepted across various art historical accounts as African art broker, connoisseur as well as one of the most influential art critics and taste makers of the early twentieth century. He is generally credited with defining the New Negro in his 1925 anthology *The New Negro*. In 1923, Alain Locke met Albert Barnes (1972-1951), one of the principle collectors of Modern and African Art in the United States. Both Locke and Barnes collected from the same Parisian art dealer, Paul Guillaume. Locke's 1925 edited anthology *The New Negro* featured a seminal essay on African Diasporic discourse entitled “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts.” Imploring Negro artists to examine African art for aesthetics and design, Locke situates African art in the context of the slave trade, asserting that the “American Negro brought over... as an emotional inheritance a deep-seated aesthetic endowment... The characteristic Africa art expressions are rigid, controlled, disciplined, abstract, heavily conventionalized;” Locke puts forth a challenge to African Americans artists that will be echoed for future generations, inquiring: “if the forefathers could so adroitly master these mediums, why not we?”

strategies as seen in the art of Sargent Johnson, Elizabeth Catlett and Teodoro Ramos Blanco.<sup>302</sup> Cleage, Dowdell and Vaughn would have had access to art essays published in other African American outlets to inform the development of this Black Christian nationalist aesthetic expressed in the *Black Madonna and Child* mural.

The July 22, 1946 edition of *Life* magazine published an illustrated article on African American art that assembled some of the “best works turned out by American artists today.”<sup>303</sup> Across the sculptures of Sargent Johnson, William E. Artis and Eloise Bishop, subtle abstraction was employed to render the Negro subject. This is most evident in *Chester* by Johnson which originally appeared in Locke’s *The Negro in Art*.<sup>304</sup> (Figure 5. 11) Johnson also is attentive to the role light plays in emphasizing a flattened plane as well as design features such as the almond eyes and the rounded jaw line of the figure. This *Life* magazine feature also included *Draped Head* by William Artis. (Figure 5. 11) Although the naturalism he learned from Augusta Savage is prominent, the artist uses line and abstracted planes and shapes to render mass in this bust.<sup>305</sup> The strong emphasis on the brow and lips conveyed through shadow corresponds with design

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<sup>302</sup> Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art; A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1969) 127-129. The section on Negro Artists end with the two page layout featuring Jacob Lawrence, notable selections from his Toussaint Louverture series. It should be noted the black and white reproduction flattens the face perhaps providing a point of reference for Dowdell’s exploration into color.

<sup>303</sup>“Negro Artists Win Top U.S. Honors,” *Life Magazine*, (22 Jul 1946): 63, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=VksEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA62&pg=PA62#v=onepage&q&f=false>> (Accessed: March 29, 2016).

<sup>304</sup> James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943), (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992) 95. Porter discussed *Chester* as reflecting the influence of “Egyptian portraiture of the Amarna period than to Ivory Coast or Sudanese forms.” For more on Sargent Johnson’s modern aesthetic see Jacqueline Francis, *Making Race: Modernism and “Racial Art” in America*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).

<sup>305</sup>Lowery Stokes Sims, *CommonWealth: Art by African Americans in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, (Boston: MFA Publication, 2015), 62-63.

elements of the Dowdell's depiction of the black Madonna. Glanton Dowdell refined his approach to light and value in his studies produced during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>306</sup>

The flattening of form articulated through value variations guided Glanton Dowdell's interpretation of the chancel mural's model, Rose Waldon. Waldon was characterized as a young mother from the local neighborhood early in news coverage of the mural.<sup>307</sup> (Figure 5. 12) But by 1970, *Ebony Magazine* recognized Rose Waldon as one of Detroit's top black fashion models.<sup>308</sup> An undated photograph shows Waldon wearing a closely cropped Afro, a variation on an icon of the Black Power Movement. She was selected because she exuded a "self-confident grace," according to Dowdell.<sup>309</sup> In the quarter length, tightly cropped archival photograph, the sitter is stylishly fashioned with a hounds tooth overcoat atop of a white blouse with a thin white collar and circular ornate earrings.

According to the artist, a sense of gender solidarity was at the heart of this project. In Ellen Goodman's *Detroit Free Press* article, Dowdell relates the mural in his personal experiences, stating, "[The Black Madonna mural] is me...I can't divorce the Madonna from black women. I don't think that any of the experiences of the Madonna were more poignant or dramatic than those of any Negro Mother."<sup>310</sup> This sense of identification with the female experience could be a visual retort to the 1965 highly publicized Moynihan Report entitled, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* which attributed African American poverty to the

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<sup>306</sup> His interest in the light and value is evident in the *Black Madonna and Child* mural as well as "untitled Arab woman."

<sup>307</sup> Goodman, "Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967.

<sup>308</sup> "Have Black Models Really Made It?" *Ebony Magazine*, (May 1970): 156, as republished by GoogleBooks, (accessed: March 20, 2016).

<sup>309</sup> Goodman, "Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967; "Have Black Models Really Made It?" *Ebony Magazine*, (May 1970): 156, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=xxaD9f5RxN4C&lpq=PA156&dq=rose%20waldron&pg=PA156#v=onepage&q=rose%20waldron&f=false>> (accessed: March 20, 2016).

<sup>310</sup> Goodman, "Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967.



breakdown of the nuclear family.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, Dowdell's decision to employ Waldon also suggests the conception of this mural was influenced by a variety of artistic expressions of the Black Arts Movement, including fashion.

A critical consideration of gender and agency must be engaged when considering a group of men grafting meaning onto the female black body. Art historians Lisa Farrington, Lisa Gail Collins and Kristin Ellsworth have addressed the patriarchal rhetoric and ideas that came to define the Black Nationalist expressions.<sup>312</sup> They have also diligently recorded the strategies of Black female artists such as Faith Ringgold in subverting the notion of black women as "baby-makers" promoted by Black Nationalist leaders including Ron Karenga and Molefi Asante.<sup>313</sup> Recent analysis of the mural against Dowdell's body of art produced for the League of Black Revolutionary Workers offers a different interpretive perspective. Demonstrating the ways the *Black Madonna and Child* mural was influenced by a range of protest organization, Ursula McThaggart states, "Dowdell's mural offered a counterpoint to the League's often sexist texts. Although the LRBW [League of Revolutionary Black Workers] failed to present its positive relationships with women and other allies in its publications, this lone instance of visual art illuminated the groups more conciliatory side..."<sup>314</sup> McThaggart goes on to interpret the mural as a permanent testament to the links between black radical organizations, confirming the *Black Madonna and Child* mural as representing the intersection of labor and Black Nationalism traditions.

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<sup>311</sup> Rebecca Zorach, "'Dig the Diversity in Unity': AfriCOBRA's Black Family," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 28 (2011): 102-111.

<sup>312</sup> Kristin L. Ellsworth, "Africobra and the Negotiation of Visual Afrocentrism," *Civilisations*, 58 (Winter 2009): 29, 3; Lisa E. Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 146-157.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, 29; Lisa Gail Collins, "Activist Who Year for Art That Transforms: Parallels in the Black Arts and Feminist Art Movements in the United States," *Signs* 30 (Spring 2006):717-752.

<sup>314</sup> Ursula McThaggart, *Guerrillas in the Industrial Jungle: Radicalism's Primitive and Industrial Rhetoric* (Albany: State University Press, 2012) 84.

Cleage, Dowdell, Vaughn and Baker represent the efforts of a progressive, nascent Pan-Africanist community housed at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. It is difficult to assess all of the figures behind the conception and actualization of the chancel mural. These men and the community they represented were influenced by the development of mother and child iconography in American art as well as the reception of Western Madonna iconography in American publications. *The Black Madonna and Child* mural occupies a transitional role in the development of African American public mural history. Because the site was used as a space for public meeting, a broad audience viewed the mural. The final section of this chapter will explore the history of reproduction of the mural which further extended the reach of this art object during the 1970s.

Although it was not housed in public spaces like the walls of respect and dignity of the 1970s, the *Black Madonna and Child* composition and its circulation christened the use of murals as a Black Arts Movement medium. The inclusion of the Rev. Cleage in Chicago's *Wall of Respect* seems to confirm the influence he accrued philosophically in developing new black-centered theologies as well as culturally in commissioning the *Black Madonna and Child* mural.<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, *The Black Madonna and Child* mural re-presents two foundational motifs in African American art history: mother and child iconography as well as racialized or Black Christ images. Above all, the Shrine of the Black Madonna's *Black Madonna and Child* mural is an epistemological tool that aims to bring about questions concerning the validity of Western

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<sup>315</sup> Jeff Donaldson, "The Rise and Fall and Legacy of the Wall of Respect Movement," *International Review of African American Art* 15 (1998): 26. One of the first visual art projects of the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) was the *Wall of Respect*. The mural was painted and assembled on the side of an abandoned building in the predominantly African American community of South Side Chicago. The artwork, completed during the summer of 1967, celebrated African American leaders through portraiture across painting and photography. The event of completing the mural attracted police surveillance and organizational infiltration that led the organizations demise and the demolition of the structure. *The Wall of Respect* is recognized as one of the earliest African American non-institutional public art project. A portrait of Albert Cleage was included in William Walker's portion of the mural on religion.

Christian and historical narratives. This painting was crafted with the intention of allowing African American viewers to associate notions of blackness, both racial and cultural, with divinity and a tradition of black protest of oppression.

### **Contextualizing *The Black Madonna and Child Mural in Twentieth Century American Art Production***

The following formal interpretation of Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* mural will contextualize the artwork and the artist's development within the history of American mural traditions as well as the Rev. Cleage's sermons from the late 1960s. Artistic renderings of Christian icons as racially black were persistent throughout twentieth century American Art. As early as the late nineteenth century, African American leaders such as Cassius M. Clay and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner affirmed Jesus Christ was a Negro as a means of self-determination.<sup>316</sup> Black radical proponents throughout the twentieth century advanced this perspective. Marcus Garvey used the notion of Black Jesus Christ to construct a new worldview rooted in the experience of the African Diaspora.<sup>317</sup> Scholars of American religion have traditionally focused on the chronology and significance of Black Christ iconography. Stephen Prothero's *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* as well as Edward Blum and Paul Harvey's *The Color of Christ: the Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* reference the Shrine of the Black Madonna's chancel mural but focus primarily on the theological contributions of the Rev. Cleage.<sup>318</sup> Historian Angela Dillard advances Prothero's initial effort to

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<sup>316</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner*, (New York: Arno Press, 1971).

<sup>317</sup> Marcus Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, (Dover: Majority Press, 1986).

<sup>318</sup> Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God & the Saga of Race in America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Stephen R. Prothero, *American Jesus : How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003).

examine Black Christ iconography in art produced by African Americans citing William H. Johnson and Jacob Lawrence as notable precedents.<sup>319</sup>

Art historians Jennifer L. Strychasz and Kymberly Pinder have diligently traced the relationship between theologies espoused by African American religious leaders and black Christian iconography. Pinder's 1997 essay "'Our Father, God; our Brother, Christ; or are We Bastard Kin?': Images of Christ in African American Painting" presents the range of strategies African American artists employed in representing Christ.<sup>320</sup> The author contrasts white images of Christ in the art of Henry Ossawa Tanner and Archibald Motley, Jr. with the black Christ iconography by Aaron Douglas and William H. Johnson.<sup>321</sup> Pinder also considers Romare Bearden's *Mary Supporting Christ* in her overview of this visual motif. Although the divine pair is not represented as black, Bearden's "non-traditional" image of Christ in his 1945 *Passion of Christ series* offers an important point of contrast to his black Madonna and child compositions from the late 1960s. Jennifer L. Strychasz extends this analysis in her dissertation by introducing additional African American artists that explored this motif.<sup>322</sup>

The following will investigate the consistent recurrence of Black Madonna and Child iconography in American art, demonstrating how the motif reflected a range of beliefs within the African American community. The chronology that follows will also consider sites where artists

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<sup>319</sup> Angela D. Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2007), 209-10.

<sup>320</sup> Kymberly N. Pinder, "'Our Father, God; Our Brother, Christ; or Are We Bastard Kin?': Images of Christ in African American Painting," *African American Review* 31, (1997): 223-233.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. Blum & Harvey and Prothero incorporate Pinder's discussion of William H. Johnson's *Jesus and the Three Mary*. This artwork becomes one of singular art historical referential point for Black Madonna iconography in Pinder's analysis.

<sup>322</sup> Jennifer Lynn Strychasz, "Jesus Is Black": Race and Christianity in African American Church Art," Diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2003, 48-49. She featured artists such as Ellis Wilson and Allan Crite; two artists whose Black Madonna and Child compositions were published during the 1940s. Crite's illustrated art book, *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord* (1944) and Ellis Wilson's *The Holy Family Triptych* (1942-43) were thoroughly explored in this study.

and patrons may have encountered Black Madonna iconography in American publications. Situating *The Black Madonna and Child* mural in the iconographic historical trajectory of American art, this examination will focus on Black Madonna imagery in order to highlight the aesthetic and theological intervention made in Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* mural.

African American artists worked to visualize black Christian icons throughout the twentieth century. These artists were inspired by the 1890s controversial assertions of God as racially black or Negro promoted by Pentecostal preacher William Christian and the A.M.E leader Bishop Henry McNeal Turner.<sup>323</sup> In 1904, an obscure Chicago-based self-taught artist, Proctor Chisholm, completed the mural, *Black Christ and Mary*, in the sanctuary of Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church. (Figure 5. 13) As one of the earliest known surviving murals of a Black Christian icon in the United States, this artwork indicates the immediate impact of the reconsideration of Christ's race that Bishop Henry McNeal Turner demanded.<sup>324</sup> In this apse mural, the Madonna and Christ are depicted singularly, flanked by angels, and floating on clouds. Christ stands in profile, with arms extended open towards Mary as to welcome her. Contrasting Christ's vertical line, Mary is rendered in contrapposto, appearing to levitate at a slight diagonal. The artist references the Western tradition in the use of blue fabric, a color employed to distinguish Mary.<sup>325</sup> *Black Christ and Mary* can be interpreted as illustrating the theme of the assumption of the Virgin popularized by Italian Renaissance masters such as Titian. Considering Cleage's travels to Chicago alongside Dowdell's time pursuing art education in Chicago, *Black Christ and Mary* must be recognized as a probable, accessible precedent.

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<sup>323</sup> Henry McNeal Turner, and Jean Lee Cole, *Freedom's Witness : The Civil War Correspondence of Henry McNeal Turner*, ( Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2013); Milton C. Sernett, *African American Religious History : A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>324</sup> Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016) 4-5.

<sup>325</sup> Timothy Verdon, Melissa R. Katz, Amy G. Remensnyder, and Miri Rubin, *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum for Women in the Arts, 2014).

During the 1920s, the Black Madonna and Child motifs gained a popularity that would make it a consistent theme alongside black mother and child imagery. During a 1924 Universal Negro Improvement Convention in Harlem, Marcus Garvey and African Orthodox Church clergyman Bishop George McGuire called for the canonization of Jesus as Black Man of Sorrows and “the Virgin Mary as a Negress.”<sup>326</sup> Garvey and the Rev. McGuire promoted the motif to African American artists, which resulted in a nationalist body of imagery among Garveyites across the United States.<sup>327</sup> Reproductions of these images have not been recovered, but oral accounts attest to their existence.<sup>328</sup> A pastel drawing which served as frontispiece of the 1925 edition of *The New Negro* entitled, *The Brown Madonna*, by German artist Winnold Reiss, affirms the popularity of Black Madonna iconography. (Figure 5. 14) Reiss’s modern Madonna wears contemporary clothing and hairstyle, yet maintains the implied triangular compositional shape constant in Western Madonna traditions.

Perhaps reinforcing the hope of future generations of the African Americans, Reiss’s Madonna gazes down directing the eye to the infant who stares forward. Although the child, dawned in pink hues and a harsh red outline, appears to be rendered as a girl, *The Brown Madonna* still articulated messianic connotations. American literature scholar Steven Pinkerton emphasizes the religious tones this composition contributed to this. *The New Negro* maintains:

And no less than suggestive placement of the “Brown Madonna” cradling the New Negro at the beginning of the book, the apocalypticism at its end ensured that the entire volume would cohere in the desired New Testament fashion. That *The New Negro’s* biblicization was intentional is further suggested by the ways it

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<sup>326</sup> Strychasz, “Jesus Is Black”: Race and Christianity in African American Church Art,” Diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2003, 23.

<sup>327</sup> Dillard, 290.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

differs from its predecessor, the “Harlem number” of *Survey Graphic* that Locke also edited.<sup>329</sup>

Reiss’s *Brown Madonna* was interpreted as a symbol of cultural regeneration in the same way that Dowdell’s *Black Madonna and Child* mural signals the proliferation of the Black Nation.<sup>330</sup> *The Brown Madonna* should be noted as an influence on Cleage as he is recognized as being thoroughly immersed in Harlem Renaissance literature.<sup>331</sup>

Black Madonna and Child imagery continues to appear in art produced by African Americans during the 1930s. Harlem photographer James Latimer Allen composed and captured a pictorial rendering of the theme in his *Brown Madonna*.<sup>332</sup> Making titular reference to Reiss’s pastel drawing, Allen’s *Brown Madonna* presents a pictorial photograph, replete with costuming meant to evoke the shrouds of cloth Mary is adorned with in Western depictions. An organic circular shape in the painted backdrop articulates divine light through the use of tonal gradation creating a halo. A central similarity between Allen’s *Brown Madonna* and Dowdell’s *Black Madonna and Child* lies in the pose of the sitters. Mary’s frontal pose and secure embrace of the Christ-child in profile bears a striking resemblance to *Black Madonna and Child*. Dowdell adapts Allen’s composition by rendering the Madonna, standing with imposing scale and a focused, direct gaze. Allen’s photograph was featured on the cover of *Opportunity* magazine in December 1941, thus making it accessible in circulated reproductions.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Steven Pinkerton, “‘New Negro’ V. ‘Niggeratti’”: Defining and Defiling the Black Messiah,” *MODERNISM/MODERNITY* 20 (2013): 544.

<sup>330</sup> For more information on the role print culture played in revising Christian iconographies see Caroline Goesser, “Religious as ‘Power Site of Cultural Resistance,’” *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2007).

<sup>331</sup> Cleage, *The Black Messiah*, 97.

<sup>332</sup> James Allen Latimer, *Brown Madonna*, photograph, 1930s, as republished in Camara Dia Holloway, *Portraiture and the Harlem Renaissance: the Photographs of James L. Allen*, (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1999) 30. During the 1930s and 1940s, *Brown Madonna* iconography was circulated in African American outlets such as *Opportunity*.

<sup>333</sup> Camara Dia Holloway, *Portraiture and the Harlem Renaissance: the Photographs of James L. Allen*, (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1999) 30.

Led by Alain Locke and James A. Porter, the early 1940s was a pivotal period for publications on African American art. Although Locke's 1940 *The Negro in Art* did not include any images on Black Madonnas, the pictorial record documented the traditional European models in the work of Sebastian Gomez.<sup>334</sup> *The Negro in Art* featured white representations of Christian icons by African American artists such as Horace Pippin's *Christ* (1939). Locke incorporated at least five compositions entitled *Mother & Child*. Heinz Warneke was among the white artists that explored the theme in Locke's text.<sup>335</sup> Warneke's 1939 public sculpture presents a kneeling upright mother embracing her child, rendered in partial profile. The imposing scale emphasized by value contrast at the brow and arms offer design strategies for the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1's *Black Madonna and Child*.

In 1943, James A. Porter's seminal art history of African American art, *Modern Negro Art*, was published, offering about one hundred and fifty pages of text to complement the over two hundred illustrations in Locke's 1940 book. While Porter attentively documents the institutional patronage of early African American denomination like the AME Church and the AME Zion Church, he limits his discussion of religious artwork to Henry Ossawa Tanner.<sup>336</sup> Contrary to Porter's assessment, some artists garnered commissions from churches that afforded the opportunity to explore Black Madonna iconography. One year before he completed murals in the First Church of Deliverance, Chicago-based artist Frederick D. Jones painted *Mother and*

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<sup>334</sup> Locke, *The Negro in Art*, 130. Locke cites Gomez as mulatto from Bermuda that painted in Seville.

<sup>335</sup> Margaret Rose Vendryes, *Barthé: A Life in Sculpture*, (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008) 82-83. Richmond Barthe's supervisor during his employment with the Treasury Relief Art Program's Harlem River Houses project,

<sup>336</sup> Anna O. Marley, *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit* (Philadelphia Pa.: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2012); Porter, 63. Henry O. Tanner (1859-1937) was an American expatriate in Paris during the early twentieth century. Tanner was the son of AME Bishop, Henry Tucker Tanner. He was one of the earliest African American students to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He was one of the earliest African American painters to receive international recognition. The absence of this subject matter is addressed in Porter's rationale. Referring to Tanner as "the first modern exponent of religious painting," Porter asserts, "A painter of religious subjects today is more or less of an anachronism, but the spiritual and artistic conviction of Tanner's work, especially that after 1900, cannot be ignored."



*Child* in 1945.<sup>337</sup> Although the watercolor composition bares a secular title, this image features a brown maternal figure, adorned in traditional blue and red, holding a young female child. An image of a black Christ, crowned with thorns, is placed on a dilapidated wall diagonally above Mary's head. Dowdell could have potentially been exposed to the art of Jones, and other African American artists like Charles White, during his art education in Chicago.<sup>338</sup>

Both Locke and Porter include Elizabeth Catlett's thirty-five inch stone sculpture, *Negro Mother and Child*. This is her earliest exploration into mother and child iconography.<sup>339</sup> In his effort to fulfill the goal of defining the aesthetic elements of *Modern Negro Art*, Porter praises *Negro Mother and Child* for its "rotund massiveness" and "undeniable" rendering of Negro physical traits.<sup>340</sup> Catlett emphasizes the racial designation nominally and visually through details such as the patterned textured hair. The horizontal lines of the recessed oval eyes are balanced by the width of the broad triangular nose and lips. Visualizing the biological maternal connection,

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<sup>337</sup> M. Akua McDaniel, "Frederick C. Flemister," *To Conserve a Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, Richard J. Powell, ed. (Andover: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1999) 196. Frederick C. Flemister (1917-1976) was a southern painter who gained an artistic sensibility under the mentorship of his art instructor, Hale Woodruff. In addition to being a member of Woodruff's art club the Painter's Guild, Flemister studied with Woodruff as a student at Morehouse College. After graduation in 1939, Flemister attended John Herron Art Institute on a scholarship, which Woodruff had secured for the young painter. Flemister graduated in 1941 and joined Woodruff at Atlanta University in the Art Department. He is now documented in art histories for his portraits.

<sup>338</sup> Pinder, 57; Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, *Charles White*, (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2002). Charles White (1918-1979) was an African American muralist, painter and illustrator who was a prominent figure in figurative social realism. Charles White gained wide visibility during the mid-twentieth century with his voluminous figures that recorded African American heroes and history. In 1953, he completed a lithograph entitled *Mother and Child*. Rendered with intense naturalism, the mother is shrouded in clothing that evokes Madonna iconography. She also holds her son with a massive hand that occupies that foreground, thus offering protection through creating distance. In contrast, her child, dressed in contemporary overalls, gazes directly at the viewer. White's design offers a precedent to Dowdell's approach to sharp tonal contrast to articulate form and cultural dignity.

<sup>339</sup> Melanie Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett: An American Artist in Mexico*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000) 20; Locke, *The Negro in Art*, 115.

<sup>340</sup> Porter 132.

Catlett situates the head of the child on the mother's chest, creating an implied diagonal line to the mother's exposed breast.<sup>341</sup>

John Wilson used mother and child iconography to express concerns associated with American Social Realism. John Wilson's *Mother and Child* oil painting, published in *Life Magazine* in 1946, signaled the beginning of an iconography that would be a defining aspect of Wilson's Social Realist aesthetic.<sup>342</sup> Master draftsman, sculptor and printmaker, John Wilson, was an anchor in Boston's African American artist community during the second half of the twentieth century. Wilson constructed his 1950s Mexico City fresco, *Incident*, with a mother and child pair. In the left corner of the composition, an African American mother protectively embraces her nude child. The space between the hooded Klansmen and lynching scene is mediated by the armed father. Retaining the triangular compositional form of the Madonna and Child, Wilson merges the two figures in shape and value. In 1952, Wilson returned to this same mother and child pair in the lithograph *Mother and Child*.<sup>343</sup> The pair is rendered in a chair against an abstracted background. This print still conveys the same emotions of fear and anxiety

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<sup>341</sup> John I. H. Baur, *William Zorach*, (New York: Published for the Whitney Museum of American Art by Praeger, 1959). Charles Sheeler, *William Zorach Carving "Mother and Child,"* 1927-1930, Gelatin Silver Print, The Lane Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art <<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/263974>> (Accessed: May 28, 2016); Locke, *The Negro in Art*, 35. The scholarship of art historian Melanie Herzog traces the influence and intention behind Catlett's mother and child iconography to her personal experience with motherhood and the art of American sculptor, William Zorach. Although Catlett credits Zorach, her treatment of the mother's hands and feet bears formal similarities to Sargent Johnson's 1936 *Forever Free*.

<sup>342</sup> Patricia Hills, "The Socially Concerned Painters of the 1930s," *Social Concern and Urban Realism: American Painting of the 1930s* (Boston: Boston University Art Gallery, 1983) 9-30; Stacy I. Morgan, *Rethinking Social Realism: African American Art and Literature, 1930-1953*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004). Hills outlines a social realist aesthetics in her exhibition catalog essay. Here, Jacob Lawrence and Allan Crite are considered alongside Ben Shahn, Thomas Hart Benton and other African American painters. Morgan augments Hills scholarship examining the relationship between African American socialist communities and African American Social Realists.

<sup>343</sup> John Wilson, *Mother and Child*, 1952, lithograph, Art institute of Chicago. <[http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/222595?search\\_no=1&index=1](http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/222595?search_no=1&index=1)> (accessed: March 15, 2016). John Wilson explored the Negro Mother motif during the 1940s and 1950s akin to socialist-oriented activist artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Margaret Burroughs. Considering Cleage and Dowdell's affiliation with socialist communities and labor activist groups, the Negro Mother and Child established a precedent for the Shrine of the Black Madonna's mural.

in the mother and child abstracted mask-like faces. Wilson's lithograph circulated widely throughout the 1950s and beyond, even in the wake of the Emmitt Till murder of 1955.<sup>344</sup>

An additional precedent to consider is a 1957 linocut print entitled *Black Madonna* by Chicago arts pioneer, Margaret T. Burroughs. As one of the founders of the South Side Community Arts Center, the visual hub of Chicago Negro Renaissance of the 1930s and 1940s, Burroughs was instrumental in introducing African American artists to one another as well as mobilizing art for political action.<sup>345</sup> Elizabeth Catlett noted that Burroughs was a member of the Communist Party during the 1940s.<sup>346</sup> Almost ten years after her visit to Taller de Gráfica Popular in Mexico City, Burroughs executed her *Black Madonna* which recalls the flat ornate surfaces of Byzantine Madonnas.<sup>347</sup> In Burroughs' composition, the contrast between the black face of Mary and the white face of Christ stand apart in Black Madonna iconography by African American artists. Considering Dowdell spent several years in Chicago as well as an art student, Margaret Burroughs may have been an artist Dowdell returned to across his career.

It is important to highlight that Catlett, White, Wilson and Burroughs were all influenced by Marxist ideologies during the midcentury, which would have made them ideal artists for Glanton Dowdell to consider as artistic precedents. Stacey I. Morgan points out that Madonna and

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<sup>344</sup> Elton Fax, *17 Black Artists*, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1971). In 1970, John Wilson returned to the mother and child motif in the oil painting *Mother and Child*. Fax's 1971 publication celebrated this oil painting by placing the artwork in the cover design. Furthermore, Fax establishes the relationship between Wilson's *Incident* and subsequent mother and child compositions through illustrations.

<sup>345</sup> Herzog, 26.; Murry N. DePillars, "Chicago's African American Visual Arts Renaissance," in *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, Darlene C. Hine and John McCluskey, Jr., eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). Margaret Burroughs introduced her friend Elizabeth Catlett to Charles White in the 1940s.

<sup>346</sup> Herzog, 26-27.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid*, 54-56, 82. Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP) was a graphic artist collective emerged out of Liga de Escritores y Artista Revolucionarios (LEAR). TGP establish a printing house that supported artist committed to Mexican Nationalist political perspectives and visual contestation of systems of oppression. In 1945, TGP outlined their objective as follows: "The TGP is a center of collective work for the functional production and study of the different branches of engraving and painting. The TGP undergoes a constant effort, in order to benefit by its works the progressive and democratic interests of the Mexican people, especially in the fight against fascist reaction."

Child iconography was one of the only themes appropriated from Western Christian art by American Social Realists.<sup>348</sup> Contrasting the midcentury mother and child imagery with the Harlem Renaissance Madonna iconography, Morgan states:

...Catlett and White employ the black Madonna and child archetype as a way of eliciting an empathetic audience response to the unjust persecution endured by African Americans and the psychic strain that the ever-present threat of racial violence introduces into African American life. Thus, while the Catlett and White lithographs share with [Winnold] Reiss's *New Negro* frontispiece revisionist gesture of positioning a black Christ child, the strategic deployment of Madonna and child motif by Catlett and White would have more in common with a piece such as Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*—that is, a social realist work that depicts the imperilment of the Madonna and child as a way to more dramatically call attention to the social struggles facing contemporary mothers and children.<sup>349</sup>

Morgan's interpretation is useful in illuminating the ideas behind Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* mural. As a labor capital, Detroit was site where the proliferation of Marxist-oriented organizations and literature made an aesthetic impact on not only Dowdell, but Cleage, and Vaughn, as well as Baker.

The minds behind the Shrine of the Black Madonna's *Black Madonna and Child* mural had access to Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* mural (1931) at the Detroit Institute of Art as a model of Social Realism.<sup>350</sup> Both Patricia Hills and Stacey I. Morgan argue that Mexican muralists influenced African American Social Realist artists because of the ideological strategies

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<sup>348</sup> Morgan, 144.

<sup>349</sup> Morgan, 144, 146.

<sup>350</sup> Linda Bank Downs, *Diego Rivera: The Detroit Industry Murals*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 199-246. During July 1932 to March 1933, the Mexican Muralist Diego Rivera (1886-1957) painted an extensive mural cycle for the Detroit Institute of Arts under the title *Detroit Industry*. The courtyard mural offers a reflection on industrial production that represents all stages of manufacture from mineral extraction to assembly line movement. Rivera also included monumental deity like form in the upper registers of the murals which reference the Native American retentions of honoring the earth and nature. In addition to visual references to indigenous ancestors, this mural also represents Rivera interest in Marxist influence perspectives as well as the possibility of a Pan-American identity.

behind the public murals.<sup>351</sup> Rivera's artwork provided a precedent for the use of allegory to revise history and critique social inequalities.<sup>352</sup> Moreover, the thematic elevation of the Mexican masses to historical allegory, particularly the oppressed laborer or peasant, further reinforced the turn to visualize the spectrum of African American laborers. In fact, the creation narrative behind Dowdell's mural suggests that the strategies at the core of American Social Realism influenced the *Black Madonna and Child*. For example, the elevation of local figures is evident in the selection Rose Waldon, who was a fixture in the community. Akin to Rivera, Catlett and Wilson, Dowdell too looked to a local figure as muse.<sup>353</sup> Evoking the image of divine figures in the upper most portion of Rivera's *Detroit Industry*, the *Detroit Free Press* review of the Shrine's mural described Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* as a "weary Earth mother, protecting a young child in her arms."<sup>354</sup> The reception of the image acknowledged the cultural and artistic influences at the heart of the chancel mural. In addition to content, Dowdell echoes the aesthetic strategies and approaches of Social Realism as practiced by African American artists.

African American press outlets document the sustained interest in Black Madonna iconography during early 1960s. In June 1962, the same year that Dowdell opened his Easel Gallery, *Negro Digest* debuted an early broadside, *Black Madonna*.<sup>355</sup> (Figure 5. 9) This illustrated broadside offers a visual and textual reflection on the motif. As previously discussed, this broadside featured an illustration by Detroit artist, LeRoy Foster. In November of that same year, *Negro Digest* published an extensive feature article on the evolution of Detroit's African

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<sup>351</sup> Hills, "The Socially Concerned Painters of the 1930s," *Social Concern and Urban Realism: American Painting of the 1930s*, 14.; Morgan, 146.

<sup>352</sup> Morgan, 45-46.

<sup>353</sup> Samella Lewis, *African American Art and Artist*. 3rd ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 138-139. During the early 1970s, Wilson explored form and value in his series, "Roz." The model that initiated this sequence of artworks was Wilson's daughter's friend, who artist described as reflecting sculptural qualities.

<sup>354</sup> Goodman, "Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967.

<sup>355</sup> In a 2013 interview, Edward Vaughn confirms this publication influenced his selection of the black Madonna as the theme for the chancel mural.

American art scene. Although Dowdell was not included in the article, a reproduction of a sculpture entitled *Yom* by poet, actress and sculptress Florence Pate Sampson was reproduced. (Figure 5. 17) This inclusion is important as the caption described the sculpture as “an African Madonna.”<sup>356</sup> *Yom* is an important antecedent to the Dowdell’s Madonna design as the reproduction reveals an attention to mass, light and value. Beyond the formal commonalities, *Yom* also indicates the notion of a black Madonna of African descent as a popular motif in the Detroit arts community. Whereas Sampson’s African Madonna is pregnant with child, Dowdell’s *Black Madonna and Child* advanced this local art narrative by rendering the newborn Black Messiah protected, reiterating the notion of hope expressed in *Yom*.

*Ebony Magazine* published a photo-editorial that featured a full page reproduction of the controversial multiracial South African mural of a Black crucified Christ by Ronald Harrison during the summer of 1963.<sup>357</sup> (Figure 5. 18) Mary is represented to the right of the cross also with brown skin, intended to be read as the South African racial designation of “coloured.”<sup>358</sup> As racial tension in the United States as well as South Africa increased in the 1960s, religious communities capitalized on the circulation of Black Christian iconography as a means of conveying the potential for a new liberated cultural identity. Harrison’s artwork, which gained international media coverage as an example of South African Apartheid oppression, inspired

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<sup>356</sup>Parks, “A City Survey: The Arts in Detroit,” *Negro Digest* (November 1962): 84.  
<<https://books.google.com/books?id=WToDAAAAMBAlp=PA91&dq=detroit%20Yom&pg=PA84#v=onepage&q=detroit%20Yom&f=false>> (accessed April 20, 2016).

<sup>357</sup> “*Ebony* Photo-Editorial: The Color of God,” *Ebony Magazine* (Jan. 1963): 82-83.  
<<https://books.google.com/books?id=D1tYQ0EnFDAC&lp=PA82&dq=ronald%20harrison%20black%20christ%20south%20africa&pg=PA82#v=onepage&q=ronald%20harrison%20black%20christ%20south%20africa&f=false>> (Accessed April 27, 2016). Ronald Harrison (1940-2011) painted his *Black Christ* mural during 1963. The uncommissioned artwork came to represent the oppressive censorship of Apartheid South Africa. The mural was smuggled out of South Africa and remained in Great Britain until 1997 when it was returned to the South African National Gallery.

<sup>358</sup> Ronald Harrison, *The Black Christ: A Journey to freedom*, (Clairmont, South Africa: David Phillips Publishers, 2006).

African American artists.<sup>359</sup> Considering the evolution of Pan-Africanist ideas at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the South African Black Christ mural is an important art precedent that reintroduced racialized Christian iconography as conveying liberation theologies and visualizing opposition to black oppression.

The visual history of the Black Madonna alongside Black mother and child imagery highlights the intervention the *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural made in 1967. Dowdell's mural provided the Black Arts Movement with a Christian symbol to represent Black Nationalism. Whereas portraits and photographs of Black Nationalists leaders mid-oration came to define the Black Arts Movement during the latter years of the 1960s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna's chancel mural offered the nascent Black Arts and Black Liberation movements a Christian symbol that expressed the chromatic, cultural and spiritual potential of an emerging Black Nation. Contrasting with the creators of the Brown Madonnas of the early twentieth century, the minds behind the *Black Madonna and Child* mural intended for this artwork to communicate a revisionist cultural history that centered around a specific figure: Mary. In her book *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*, Kimberly J. Brown describes a strategy of visual protection common across the Black Atlantic. She states,

...I use visual shielding and the gender transference of the slave women's bodies as a way to deal with the corporal trajectory of diasporic movement and loss as a narrative of excess...I argue that certain historical figures of the black Atlantic are symbolic body armour and are portrayed as such; their representations are created to serve as virtual/visual protection.<sup>360</sup>

*The Black Madonna and Child* mural functioned to convey ideas of cultural nationalism and cultural protection to both its viewing public and through its circulation in the American press.

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<sup>359</sup> Strychasz, "Jesus Is Black": Race and Christianity in African American Church Art."

<sup>360</sup> Kimberly J. Brown, "Introduction: Visualizing the Body of the Black Atlantic," *The Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015)16.

*Black Madonna and Child* is a transitional artwork in the mural history of African American public art. The legacy of murals created in public spaces, typified by the Charles Alston's Harlem Hospital murals of 1936 or Hale Woodruff's Atlanta University murals of 1952, is extended in the Shrine's chancel mural.<sup>361</sup> *The Black Madonna and Child* mural occupies a sacred space that was regularly used by the broader activist community. This semi-public position extended the visibility of the mural and its multifaceted connotations, spanning Christian symbolism to Social Realism. Echoing the words of Glanton Dowdell, the Rev. Albert Cleage articulates the intended interpretation of the Shrine's Black Madonna iconography in his sermon, "A Sense of Urgency." Here, Cleage explains,

We have to have a basic commitment to build a Black Nation...That's why the black Madonna is so important to us. The Black Madonna is a black woman standing there with a little black child in her arms. And in every generation, that's what we are fighting for—that little black child...Because he has to carry on the Nation...<sup>362</sup>

Dowdell's mural influenced muralists William Walker, Eugene "Eda" Wade and DeVon Cunningham.<sup>363</sup> Art histories have documented the aforementioned artists' visits to the Shrine of

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<sup>361</sup> Farrington, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 152-154; M. Akua McDaniel, "Reexamining Hale Woodruff's Talladega College and Atlanta University Murals," *Hale Woodruff, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet and the Academy*, Amalia K. Amaki and Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, 2007).

<sup>362</sup> Albert Cleage, "A Sense of Urgency," *The Black Messiah*, 31. Cleage also mention the artist by name in this sermon.

<sup>363</sup> Farrington, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 268-69; Jennifer Lynn Strychasz, "'Jesus is Black!' Race and Christianity in African American Church Art, 1968-1986," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003), 325-27. William Walker (1927-2011) was one of the most prolific African American muralists practicing during the second half of the twentieth century. He was a member of the Organization of Black American Culture and completed the religion panel of the *Wall of Respect*. In 1971, he cofounded the Chicago Mural Group. He would go on to design more than thirty murals including *Wall of Understanding* (1970, Chicago), *Sr. Martin Luther King* (1977, Chicago) and *Reaganomics* (1982, Chicago). Eugene "Eda" Wade (1939- ) is a muralist that was a member of OBAC. After art training at Southern University and Howard University, Wade remained at Howard as artist-in-residence. During this period he completed a mural affixed to Cramton Auditorium, entitled *Black Leaders*. Wade went on to collaborate with William Walker and completed murals such as *Wall of Dignity* in Detroit. Wade would complete several murals in Chicago including *King Memorial Wall* (1982) and *Legacy* (1992). DeVon C. Cunningham (1935- ) is a painter and



the Black Madonna, #1.<sup>364</sup> But considering the circulation of the image of the mural, it is possible this massive, imposing *Black Madonna and Child* may have informed additional Black Arts Movement artists. Signature Black Arts Movements artwork that reflect thematic or design commonalities include Jeff Donaldson's *Wives of Shango* (1969), Barbara Jones-Hogu's *Nation Time* (c.1970) and Malika Roberts's *Black Madonna* (1969).<sup>365</sup> Even Romare Bearden created a *Black Madonna and Child* collage in 1969, following the *New York Times* publication of a photograph of Cleage in front of the mural.<sup>366</sup>

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muralist that was active in Detroit during the 1960s and 1970s. He gained recognition for his Black Christ murals in Detroit's St. Cecelia Catholic Church and for his portrait of Motown Records founder, Barry Gordy, stylizes in the fashion of Napoleon Bonaparte historic portraits. He gained wide visibility in 1969 when his Black Christ murals were reproduced in *Ebony* Magazine.

<sup>364</sup> Strychasz, "Black Theology, Black Politics: St. Cecelia's Catholic Church Mural, 1968," *Jesus Is Black: Race and Christianity in African American Church Art*; Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, 88. Strychasz documents DeVon Cunningham's visit to the Shrine of the Black Madonna mural. Pinder's recent scholarship has revealed Black Arts Movement muralist, William Walker and Eugene "Eda" Wade met and worked directly with Glanton Dowdell in the fall of 1967. These men also visited the church to view the *Black Madonna and Child* mural.

<sup>365</sup> Starmanda Bullock, *Jeff Donaldson, 1961-1981*, (Washington, D.C.: Gallery of Art, College of Fine Arts, Howard University, 1981); Farrington, *African American Art: A Visual and Cultural History*, pg ; Thomas Riggs, ed., *St. James Guide to Black Artists* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1997)458-459 . Jeff Donaldson (1932-2004) was one of the central aesthetic philosophers and visual artist of the Black Arts Movement. He was integral in the founding of OBAC and AfriCobra. Donaldson graduated from University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff and earned his MFA Illinois Institute of Technology. As doctoral student at Northwestern, he organized the Conference on the Functional Aspects of Black Art at Northwestern University in 1968. He earned a doctorate in African American and African art history in 1974, while serving on faculty at Howard University. Donaldson would go on to serve as chair of Howard's art department and director of the university's art gallery. Donaldson produced period defining paintings and collages during the last half of the twentieth century. Barbara Jones Hogu (1938- ) is a printmaker and painter who was instrumental in the Black Arts Movement artist collective, AfriCobra. The Chicago born artist earned a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1964 and a MFA from Illinois Institute of Technology in 1970. In addition to her signature prints, Jones Hogu is historicized as an OBAC member who painted portions of Chicago's *Wall of Respect* in 1967. Malkia Roberts (originally known as Lucille) (1927-2010) was a painter, art administrator and educator who spent the majority of her career in the Washington, D.C.-Metropolitan area. As a student of painter Lois Mailou Jones (1905-1998), She earned a BFA from Howard University in 1935 and a MFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1939. Her signature style developed into a Pan-African Abstractionist style informed by her consist travel abroad. She taught at American University, Howard University as well as several local elementary and secondary schools.

<sup>366</sup> Mary Schmidt Campbell and Sharon F. Patton, et. Al. *Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940-1987*, (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1991); Ruth Fine, ed., *Romare Bearden, American Modernist*, (Washington D.C: National Gallery of Art, 2011). Romare Bearden (1911-1988) was one of the most influential artists to define the history and aesthetic of African American art. Bearden fused

Furthermore, when one considers how the mural's deep tones were translated to black in subsequent photographic reproductions, additional significance become evident. In photographic reproductions, the chancel mural could have been interpreted as a visual symbol conveying the aesthetic potential of black as a color and as a new philosophical perspective rooted in liberation. It is important to note that Emory Douglas introduced his Mother and Child symbol to Black Panther Party iconography the same year that the *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural was completed.<sup>367</sup> Dowdell's composition should be considered alongside the artistic innovation of Faith Ringgold's *Black Light series*.<sup>368</sup> One of the most convincing artworks that suggests the

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his memories of his upbringing in Charlotte, North Carolina, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and finally Harlem, New York with the African and European aesthetics of Modern Art. After studying at Lincoln University as well as Boston University, Bearden graduated from New York University in 1935 and continued to seek art instruction from popular venues like the Art Students League. The artist was an editorialist, a commercial illustrator while developing an extensive stylistic range in his artistic production. Romare Bearden contributed to the legacy of black artist collectives and black art institution with his work in founding Spiral, the Studio Museum in Harlem and Cinque Gallery. The artist shaped the African American art historical discourse with *Six Masters of American Art* (1972) and *A History of African American Artists: From 1972 to the Present* (1993). His art has been canonized with inclusions in Western Art History text such as *Gardner's Art through the Ages* and a posthumous solo-exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

<sup>367</sup> Erika Doss, "'Revolutionary art is a tool for liberation': Emory Douglas and protest aesthetics at the Black Panther," *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*, Kathleen Cleaver and George N. Katsiaficas, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2001). Sam Durant, et al. *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007) 18-20. Emory Douglas (1943- ) is an activist printmaker and graphic designer who is known for his work as the minister of culture for the Black Panther Party. The artist was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan and relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area. During his teenage years, Douglas was incarcerated for fifteen months and introduced to printmaking while in jail. He attended San Francisco City College to study art and graphic design. This equipped Douglas with the tools to define the visual culture of the Black Panther Party in their internationally circulated material such as *The Black Panther*.

<sup>368</sup> Lisa Farrington, *Art on Fire: the Politics of Race and Sex in the Paintings of Faith Ringgold*, (New York: Millennium Fine Arts Publications, 1999) 60-61; Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, et al., *American People, Black Light: Faith Ringgold's Paintings of the 1960s* (Purchase: Neuberger Museum of Art, 2010). Artist and art educator, Faith Ringgold (1930- ), is the daughter of a fashion designer; this fact informs her feminist identity. The artist was educated at City College of New York, earning her bachelor degree in art education and a master's degree in Art. In 1967, Ringgold thrived from the success of her one woman exhibition of *American People* series. Although the *Black Light* series started in the final months of 1967, Ringgold painted the expansive series during a two year period when she was immersed in art activism with organizations such as Art Worker's Coalition and the founding of Where We at Black Women Artists?. Privileging the color black, this set of paintings are symbolic chromatic reflections on the contours and complexity of Black people and their culture. She refutes stereotypical notions of African American identity with paintings that celebrate black creation and relationship like *#1: Big Black* (1967), *#4: Mommy & Daddy* (1968) and *#11: U.S. American Black* (1969). This series is also defined by Ringgold's signature

design impact of the *Black Madonna and Child* on African American photographic practice is *Black Madonna* by Black Arts Movement photographer, Roy Lewis.<sup>369</sup> This photograph is defined by the rhythm established in value. Using his wife as model, Lewis photographed the mother with her head covered, comforting her child.<sup>370</sup> Both figures' brows and mouths are shrouded in dark shadows, leaving the foreheads, noses and arms illuminated. Lewis departs from Dowdell's configuration, as his Madonna gazes down at her child. Perhaps referencing the future of the Black Nationalist movement, the young child appears to look forward while linked to his mother's side and hands. Lewis's photograph was included in the 1969 Black Arts Publication volume, *Black Arts: An Anthology of Black Creation*. As the previous examples have demonstrated, this body of art sought to explore the relationship between tonal value and the ability of black and brown skin to serve as a positive cultural signifier. This collection of Black Arts Movement visual arts advanced a politically-oriented color theory centered on black and offered a visual retort to Raymond Saunders's 1967 apolitical manifesto "Black is a Color."<sup>371</sup>

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style of protest art in large scale compositions as represented by #10: *Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger* (1969).

<sup>369</sup> *Black Arts: an Anthology of Black Creations*, Ahmen Alhamisi and Harun Kofi Wangara, eds. (Detroit: Black Arts Publications, 1969) 90. The photograph can be found in *Black Arts: an Anthology of Black Creations*. Roy Lewis (1937- ) is a Black Arts Movement photographer who worked as a commercial and fine arts photographer during the late twentieth century. Born in Natchez, Mississippi, Lewis spent extensive time in Chicago, where he contributed to the *Wall of Respect* (1967) and worked for Johnsons Publishing and the Chicago Daily Times. The photographer was a member of OBAC. Lewis consistently advanced Black Nationalist agendas by serving as photographer for the Nation of Islam's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. Lewis travelled to Lagos, Nigeria for the Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) and documented his experience through photograph and film.

<sup>370</sup> Roy Lewis, *Black Madonna (Wife of Artist)*, undated photograph, c.1969, *Black Arts: an Anthology of Black Creations*, Ahmen Alhamisi and Harun Kofi Wangara, eds. (Detroit: Black Arts Publications, 1969) 90.

<sup>371</sup> Lisa Farrington, "Pop and Agitprop: the Black Arts Movement," *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 248-249; Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *Six Black Masters of American Art* (New York: Zenith Books, 1972). Raymond Saunders (1934- ) was born and educated in Pennsylvania at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (BFA), the Barnes Foundation and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. After a brief period in New York, the artist moved to San Francisco where he earned a MFA from California College of Arts and Craft. In the aforementioned document, Raymond Saunders asserts: "Some angry artists are using their art as political tools, instead of vehicles of free expression. An artist who is always harping upon resistance, discrimination, opposition,

For the religious community at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, Black Madonna iconography represented the beginning of a cultural revisionist project, which troubles the blind acceptance of Western epistemologies. As the next section will demonstrate, this criticality was reinforced through the art and visual culture of church literature. Fine arts as well as everyday material culture served as a site where this congregation could exercise agency over their representation and religious philosophies.

### **Rhetoric and Re-Visions: the Visual Culture of the Shrine's Black Nation**

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, # 1 developed a Black Christian Nationalist visual culture that displaced Eurocentric Christian iconography with painted and photographic images. Beginning with the Heritage Committee's inaugural mural project, the visual shift was introduced in consistent news coverage and photographic reproductions of the chancel mural from March 1967 to through the 1970s. During the 1970s, photographs circulated of the congregation in the church newsletters, *Black Nation News* and *Ujamaa Kazi*. This local newsletter rapidly grew into the denominational outlet that united the Shrine of the Black Madonna Churches located throughout Michigan as well as Atlanta and Houston by the late 1970s. *Black News Nation* also broadcasted the activities of the growing of the nationalist religious community.

Photography was central in the Shrine of the Black Madonna's visual campaign. Moreover, their iconographic agenda demonstrates an attentiveness toward visualizing Christ's Black Nation, initially posited by Cleage during the first half of the 1960s. Tina Campt's book *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora* outlines an interpretation of

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besides being a drag, eventually plays right into the hands of politicians he claims to despise—and is held there, unwittingly (and witlessly) reviving slavers in another form. For the artist, this is aesthetic atrophy.” Saunders is greatly influence by his travels to Italy and countries in Africa.

black photographic practice that illuminates the cultural work at play across the Shrine of the Black Madonna's visual and material culture. Camppt maintains,

The social life of the photo includes the intentions of both sitters and photographers as reflected in their decisions to take particular kinds of pictures. . . . What I am suggesting is that we engage these images as sites of *articulation* and *aspiration*; as personal and social statements that express how ordinary individuals envisioned their sense of self, subjectivity, and their social status; and as objects that capture and preserve those articulations in the present as well as for the future.<sup>372</sup>

With Cleage establishing the ideological tenor for the church publications, photography functions as a site of meaning, advancing the agenda of African Diasporic visual legacies. Following an examination of reproductions of the chancel in media outlets as well as photography in *Shine of the Black Madonna* publications, this study will explore popular symbols that signaled the revisionist shift in the material life of the congregation. As the visual and material record will indicate, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 intentionally revolutionized their religious iconography beyond the *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural in order to communicate a new cultural perspective informed by Nationalist and Labor activism and Black Liberation Theology, as well as the Black Arts Movement.

Cleage, Vaughn and the Heritage Committee ensured the creation of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural was highly publicized in the press. On Saturday, March 25, 1967, one day before the mural unveiling, the *Detroit Free Press* featured a cropped photograph of the artist next to the mural in progress, thus initiating a photographic circulation of the icon that would persist through the 1970s. The featured photograph was captured by *Detroit Free Press* photographer, Tom Venaleck, accompanied an article penned by staff writer Ellen Goodman, entitled "Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes." The artwork is introduced as reflecting the founding of

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<sup>372</sup> Tina Camppt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 6-7.

Black Christian Nationalism and the “precept that Jesus was black.”<sup>373</sup> The majority of the Goodman’s account focuses on Dowdell as a traditionally trained, prison artist who emerged as one of Detroit’s most controversial activist. She also describes Dowdell’s Madonna as “a weary earthmother,” which signals an association with Rivera’s indigenous spiritual figures in the upper registers of *Detroit Industry*.

Venaleck’s photograph presents Dowdell elevated on a ladder, parallel to a cropped half portrait of the mural. Capturing the photograph from below, the photographer composes the image to appear as though both the artist and Madonna look directly out at the viewer. In this way, Venaleck visually translates the artist’s identification with the Black Madonna in the text when Dowdell reflects, “This is me...I can’t divorce the Madonna from black women.”<sup>374</sup> This inaugural photograph also conveys the tonal complexity of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural. In the photograph, the sites of intellect, perception and oration appear illuminated. This contrasts with the dark tones of the Madonna’s eyes, hand and Christ. It should be noted the caption of this photograph was “The artist and ‘The Black Madonna.’” This coupling of activist and *Black Madonna* mural, with the Black Christ’s presence reduced to visual implication becomes the framing device for the artwork. In other words, the mural, most often referred to as *Black Madonna* in the press, is almost always reproduced with an activist, in order to emphasize newly ascribed nationalist connotations invested in black Christian symbology.

Shortly after the mural unveiling, the Heritage Committee prepared a four page pamphlet that introduced Black Christian Nationalism through rhetoric and a photograph of the mural.<sup>375</sup> A

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<sup>373</sup> Goodman, “Black Madonna Stirs Empathy of Negroes,” *Detroit Free Press*, 25 Mar 1967.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Unidentified photographer, *Untitled (Glanton Dowdell alongside Black Madonna mural)* from Heritage Committee, Central United Church of Christ, “The Black Madonna, pamphlet” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. The Heritage Committee of the church

photograph of Dowdell alongside the mural was placed on the cover before a historical and theological rationale for the commission that began under the header “The Black Madonna.”<sup>376</sup> This pamphlet included a full length photograph of Dowdell on a ladder alongside the mural holding a brush and rectangular palette. A variation of this document was republished in the Harlem-based black radical magazine, *Liberator*.<sup>377</sup> On the following page of this *Liberator* issue, the editors placed a half page advertisement for the Second Annual Black Arts Convention held at the Shrine of the Black Madonna.<sup>378</sup> The *Liberator* introduced Dowdell’s mural to a national audience. This would be advanced by Johnson Publishing outlets during the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>379</sup>

Following the successful inaugural Black Arts Convention of 1966, Edward Vaughn collaborated with Glanton Dowdell, a representative of the Black Arts Confederation of Unity, to host the Second edition of this conference which explored the political potential of black aesthetics across art forms.<sup>380</sup> The Annual Black Arts Conventions of 1966 and 1967 allowed the

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assembled an informational pamphlet that was distributed for free. The mural image on the cover is accompanied by a sermon by Cleage printed in the interior of the pamphlet.

<sup>376</sup> Heritage Committee, Central United Church of Christ, “The Black Madonna,” the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 41, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This convention was organized by Forum 66, a Detroit cultural activist group.

<sup>377</sup> For more information of *Liberator Magazine*, see Christopher Matthew Tinson, “The fight for freedom must be fought on all fronts: *Liberator* magazine and Black radicalism, 1960–1971” (diss, UMass Amherst, 2010).; Kristin Cleage, “Man of the Year—Detroit’s Albert B. Cleage, Jr.” Finding Eliza Archival website <<http://findingeliza.com/archives/16647>> (Accessed: May5, 2016). It should also be noted Cleage maintained a supportive relationship with the magazine as he was celebrated as Man of the Year in a 1963 edition. A cropped version of the pamphlet photograph was featured in this magazine and credited to local Detroit artist, James D. Wilson.

<sup>378</sup> “Black Madonna,” *Liberator Magazine* ( June 1967): 15.

<sup>379</sup> As their archive evidences, Johnson Publishing was instrumental in influencing the practice of aesthetics among African American subscribers. During the 1960s and 1970s, Johnson Publications including *Digest* (*Black World*), *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines encouraged an adoption and familiarity with art produced by artist of African descent. Johnson Publications would pair articles on African art alongside African American art, visually affirming artistic connections across the African Diaspora.

<sup>380</sup> James Edward Smethurst, “Institutions for the People: Chicago, Detroit, and the Black Arts Movement in the Midwest,” *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 226-227. The Black Arts Confederation of Unity was a national

site to be experienced as a space aesthetically transformed by the evolving philosophies and theologies emerging from Black Liberation movements of the 1960s. The attendees of both the 1966 and 1967 conferences were able to contrast the preceding colonial, patriotic stained glass window with the newly completed Black Nationalist Christian symbol embodied in black motherhood. Although no photographic reproductions of the space were included in *Negro Digest's* 1966 coverage, the Second Annual Black Arts Convention projected the mural to a larger audience beyond the attendees as the events were covered in *Negro Digest*.<sup>381</sup> The same 1967 photograph appeared in both *Negro Digest* and *Jet Magazine* coverage of the Black Arts Conference.<sup>382</sup>

In hosting the Second Annual Black Arts Conference, the church's Heritage Committee provided an opportunity to reveal their the newly commissioned chancel mural completed in the spring of 1967 to Black Arts Movement practitioners. The Black Arts Conference of 1967 inaugurated the photographic circulation of the large scale mural in African American press outlets.<sup>383</sup> James Smethurst offers the most comprehensive scholarly assessment of the Black Arts Conference emphasizing the importance of an emerging "new nationalist" tradition at the Shrine of the Black Madonna:

A crucial contribution of these interlocking political and cultural institutions to the development of a national movement, especially the idea of a national Black Arts movement, was the Black Arts conventions...these conventions were notable because they provided a counterpoint to the better-known writers conferences organized by John O. Killens at Fisk University during the same years...But it

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organization founded in the early 1960s committed to Black Nationalism and cultural production. This organization was head-quartered in Detroit and hosted an annual Black Art Conference during the 1960s.

<sup>381</sup> Dudley Randall, "Assembly in Detroit—Black Arts Convention," *Negro Digest* (Nov 1967): 42-48, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=xjkDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA42&dq=black%20arts%20convention&pg=PA42#v=onepage&q=black%20arts%20convention&f=false>> (Accessed: May 6, 2016).

<sup>382</sup> The photographer of the image is not documented in the text or archival holdings.

<sup>383</sup> Dudley Randall, "The Black Arts Convention," *Negro Digest* (Nov 1967), 46, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=xjkDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA46&dq=Henri%20King%20charles%20e%20noch&pg=PA46#v=onepage&q&f=false>> (Accessed: May 15, 2016)



was at the [1967] Detroit convention, not at Fisk, where public celebration of Malcolm X, his politics and his relation to the emerging Black Arts movement was made the centerpiece of the program.<sup>384</sup>

With the *Black Madonna and Child* mural looming over the conference attendees from across the nation, the three day conference set out to address the arts' role in protest and social change. On Saturday's art panel proceedings, printmaker Charles W. Enoch Jr. and painter Henri Umbaji King debated the role of the visual arts in the Black Power movement. These artists agreed there was no "soul art" or black art that was responding to the black oppression.<sup>385</sup> King even criticized black artists for painting "black Christs and Malcolm X's" as mere mimesis.<sup>386</sup> Despite this critique, reproduction of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural initiated an introduction to a brand of Black Liberation Theology known as Black Christian Nationalism. The aesthetic contribution of challenging Eurocentric Christian iconography remains one of the most profound and overlooked aspects of both Black Liberation Theology and the Black Arts Movement.

The aforementioned Johnson Publishing photograph advances the Shrine's strategy of pairing the mural with figures affiliated with Black Nationalism. *Jet Magazine* reinforced this visual strategy by identifying the woman and children that stand before the *Black Madonna and Child* mural. (Figure 5. 15) Black Arts Movement dramatist Val Gray Ward is documented engaging "the Shabazz kids," the children of Black power visionary Malcolm X.<sup>387</sup> The instructive gestures of Ward reveals additional aspects of maternal rearing embodied in the Madonna as a symbol of black motherhood. In this way, this photographic introduction of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural in Johnson Publishing outlets emphasizes the regenerative

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<sup>384</sup> Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*, 226.

<sup>385</sup> Dudley Randall, "The Black Arts Convention," 46.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> National Report: Prof. Notes Negroes Gifts at Detroit's Confab," *Jet Magazine* (3 August 1967): 4-5. <<https://books.google.com/books?id=trkDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA4&dq=val%20gray%20ward&pg=PA5#v=onepage&q&f=false>> (Accessed June 30, 2016).

symbolism of the chancel mural as well as the dynamism of black motherhood. Akin to the Black Christ, the Shabazz children visually represent the future of Black Nationalism.

During the year of the mural unveiling, the Heritage Committee also promoted the *Black Madonna and Child* and the theological precepts it represents in the form of a Christmas card.

<sup>388</sup>This Black Christian Nationalist postcard was available for sale at the church. The church used the popular New York based company Colorcraft Studios to mass produce the object.<sup>389</sup> The greeting card featured a color photograph of the pulpit, with the chancel mural prominently shown. This image includes interior architectural details, such as the engaged columns that frame the pulpit. *The Black Madonna and Child* mural contrasts with the white Neocolonial sanctuary and also creates a chromatic anchor around the dark tone of the radicalized black Madonna.

The text inside the card documents the artist and church location, while also scripturally grounding the Black Nationalist Christmas greeting. The following text is centered, in large text: “May the joy of the awakening of the Black Nation be yours on this Christmas day and throughout the coming year.”<sup>390</sup> In the lower right corner of the card, an Old Testament scripture from Isaiah 9:1-3 is printed. The sacred passage invests symbolism in darkness in an effort to recontextualize Christmas. Making reference to an emerging nation, the scripture reads: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast harnessed its

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<sup>388</sup> Colorcraft Studio (NY), Christmas Card with photographic reproduction of The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 pulpit, 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. In the fall of 1967, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 promoted the chancel mural by selling a Black Nationalist Christmas card. The photograph included architectural details in the interior décor, thus emphasizing the aesthetic intervention of the mural.

<sup>389</sup> As cited on the back of the Christmas card, the credit line also suggests the photograph was taken by a Colorcraft studios photographer.

<sup>390</sup> Interior of 1967 Christmas Card, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

joy...”<sup>391</sup> During the first Sunday of advent in December of 1967, the Rev. Albert Cleage explained the contents of the card in his sermon and encouraged parishioners to circulate this Black Nationalist Christmas card during the holiday season.<sup>392</sup> He went on to deliver the first of two sermons based on the scripture included in the Christmas greeting card. This material expression of the nascent Black Christian Nationalism movement recast Christmas as a holiday that celebrates the advancement of the Black Nation. The initial pronouncement of this message was expressed through the photographic reproduction of the transformed.

The February edition of the *United Church Herald* magazine used a color photographic reproduction of Cleage before the mural as the cover image.<sup>393</sup> The mural is associated with Cleage who is described as “one of the United Church’s most articulate—and most controversial—black pastors” in the article.<sup>394</sup> Across eight photographs, Douglas Gilbert, the *United Church Herald* photographer, records a congregation in transition where visual representations are instrumental.<sup>395</sup> The cover color image shows Pastor Cleage, to the left of the mural, leaning forward on the first pew. Akin to other Black Nationalist leaders such as the Nation of Islam’s Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Cleage wears a black suit with a black bowtie. Cleage’s direct gaze repeats the piercing stare of the Black Madonna.

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> Kristin Cleage, “Christmas Card and Sermon—Advent, December 3, 1967,” Finding Eliza Archival website <<http://findingeliza.com/archives/18642>>(Accessed: May4, 2016).

<sup>393</sup> Cover of *United Church Herald* (Feb. 1968); the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Almost one year after the mural unveiling one of the earliest color photographs of the Rev. Cleage before the artwork was featured on the cover on the *United Church Herald*. The coverage in this outlet included images of the church liturgy and the auxiliary wing of the church.

<sup>394</sup> “Interview: Al Cleage on Black Power,” *United Church Herald* (Feb. 1968): 27, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>395</sup> A full page photograph of the chancel mural with Cleage leading the sacrament of communion opens the interview. Two additional images of the religious space visually communicate the congregation’s Pan-Africanist turn.

The second photograph attests to the role African American portraiture played in adorning the Shrine's auxiliary spaces.<sup>396</sup> Actively engaging in educating the public, the Heritage Committee decorated the fellowship hall of the church to display African American heroes.<sup>397</sup> Even windows were utilized as display surfaces for images of nineteenth century icons, such as Frederick Douglas and Harriet Tubman. These portraits were placed alongside a sign with this ultimatum: Unite or Perish.<sup>398</sup> It should be noted that throughout his ministry, the Rev. Cleage maintained an interest in utilizing the church as a relevant tool to mobilize youth. With this in mind, this layout demonstrates an alternative notion of the Black Arts Movement aesthetic strategies that involved radicalizing the narrative around African American history and visual representation.

In 1968, New York publishing house, Sheed and Ward, released *Black Messiah*. This text contains Cleage's sermons delivered between 1965 and 1967 which best defined the theological and cultural ideas of the Shrine of the Black Madonna. The literal and metaphorical significance the Black Madonna iconography to this new philosophy is emphasized across these sermons. Cleage's biography on the book jacket introduces the new names of the church—the Shrine of the Black Madonna. Cleage delivered a sermon entitled “The Resurrection of a Nation.”<sup>399</sup> Cleage opened the sermon by referring to the mural as a “visual sermon” that represents the “historic

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<sup>396</sup> “Interview: Al Cleage on Black Power,” *United Church Herald* (Feb. 1968): 27, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This was identified as an initial goal of the Heritage Committee.

<sup>397</sup> Ed Vaughn et al., *Welcome to the Black Nation!: A Guide for Members of Central United Church of Christ, The Shrine of the Black Madonna*, 3.

<sup>398</sup> Detail of page 29 layout, “Interview: Al Cleage on Black Power,” *United Church Herald* (Feb. 1968): 29, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.; Harvey B. Lindsley, *Harriet Tubman, Full-length Portrait, Standing with Hands on Back of a Chair*, c. 1871-1876, photographic print, Library of Congress Photographs and Prints Division, <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003674596/>>(Accessed: May20, 2016). This cropped view of the *United Church Herald* feature included the image on the left that reveal the role portraiture and text-based signage played outside of the sanctuary

<sup>399</sup> This sermon was published in *Black Messiah*.

truth” of Christ’s experience as a black man fighting oppression.<sup>400</sup> After recalling his emotional childhood response to an encounter with a lynching photograph in the *Crisis*, Cleage drew a direct correlation between images and self-perception. Cleage asserts:

So, as we unveil our Black Madonna, it symbolizes for us an important accomplishment. We now understand that Christianity is our religion, that Israel was a Black Nation. Go back and read your own history in Dubois’ book, *The World and Africa*. All of the people in that part of the world were black... We issue a call to all black Churches. Put down this white Jesus who has been tearing you to pieces... Remember that we are worshipping a Black Jesus who was a Black Messiah. Certainly, God must be black if he created us in his own image.<sup>401</sup>

This sermon activated this space as the home of a new aesthetic movement that correctively reinterpreted a spiritual legacy informed by Black Liberation Theology. Emerging from the desire to correct art historical assumptions concerning the racial representation of Christian iconography, this religious community promoted critical cultural engagement by encouraging art patronage and agency toward visual representation. Douglas Gilbert’s photograph of the Rev. Cleage leaning before the mural was reproduced in black and white on the book jacket for the 1968 publication. This same image accompanied the *New York Times* November feature on the Cleage and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, entitled “Color God Black.”<sup>402</sup> Here, the mural is visual evidence of a “revolution in liturgy” and hymns.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Cleage, “The Resurrection of a Nation,” *The Black Messiah*, 85-86.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.98. Using the rationale of nineteenth century miscegenation laws, Cleage noted that Christ was black according to the one drop rule, asserting, “So if we think of God as a person... then God must be a combination of black, yellow and red with just a little touch of white, and we must think of God as a Black God... In America, one drop of black makes you black. So by American law, God is black and any practical interpretation, why would God have made seven-eighths of the world non-white and yet he himself be white? That is not reasonable.”

<sup>401</sup> Cleage, “The Resurrection of a Nation,” *The Black Messiah*, 114.

<sup>402</sup> Edward B. Fiske, “Color God Black,” *The New York Times*, (10 Nov 1968). This article is important as Cleage sketches out the emergence of Black Christian Nationalism as a network with churches in suburban Detroit and Cleveland.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

*Ebony Magazine* included a full length photograph of Cleage preaching before the *Black Madonna* mural to introduce Alex Poinsett 1968 essay, “Black Revolt in White Churches: Militants Attack Phony Integration, Blindness to Ghetto.”<sup>404</sup> (Figure 5. 25) Although the mural is not directly discussed in Poinsett’s text, the image of the black Madonna is visually associated with the repurposing of the Black church beyond the precedent of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights movement for the radical aim of Black Nationalism. Cleage’s oratorical posture offers a visual cue to Black Messiah through *Black Madonna and Child mural*. Six months later, Poinsett penned the seminal essay on Black Christ iconography under the title, “The Quest for the Black Christ: Radical Clerics Reject ‘Honky Christ’ Created by American Culture-Religion.”<sup>405</sup> The essay included a color photograph of the *Black Madonna and Child*, which distorts the color of the oil painting with yellow tones, was placed above a detail of DeVon Cunningham’s dome mural in St. Cecilia’s Roman Catholic Church in Detroit. (Figure 5. 26) This chronological layout confirms the influence Dowdell’s mural and Cleage’s sermons had in promoting a revision in Christian iconography for African American religious communities. The article closes with a photograph that shows Cleage as Black Arts patron and aesthetic collaborator as he discusses sketches of the monumental figure. (Figure 5. 27) Of equal import, this *Ebony* feature introduced a national audience to Glanton Dowdell, as one of the artists shaping Black Christian iconography. In fact, he is the only artist whose image is reproduced in this article.

On April 4, 1969, *New York Times* contributor Edward B. Fiske revisits Cleage and the *Black Madonna and Child* mural to represent the impact of Black power ideologies on African

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<sup>404</sup> Alex Poinsett, “Black Revolt in White Churches: Militants Attack Phony Integration, Blindness to Ghetto,” *Ebony Magazine* (Sep 1968): 62.  
<<https://books.google.com/books?id=ndsDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA63&dq=black%20revolt%20in%20white%20church&pg=PA63#v=onepage&q&f=false>> (Accessed: July 15, 2016).

<sup>405</sup> Alex Poinsett, “The Quest for Black Christ,” *Ebony Magazine* (Mar 1969): 172<<https://books.google.com/books?id=JeIDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA170&dq=quest%20for%20black%20christ&pg=PA172#v=onepage&q&f=false>>(Accessed: July 15, 2016).

American religious practice.<sup>406</sup> In this layout, the photograph of the Rev. Cleage and the mural is juxtaposed with views of the Blue Hill Soul Center in the Roxbury section of Boston to illustrate the spectrum of Black Theology. (Figure 5. 28) In Jack Manning's photograph of Cleage, he is represented as facilitating black power through posing critical questions, with hand and brow elevated. This photograph continues the visual motif of pairing the mural with Black Nationalist figures that connect black Madonna iconography with the contemporary circumstances of racial oppression. The gaze and gestural aspects of *Black Madonna and Child* reproductions convey the cultural work this art was commissioned to execute. The Shrine of the Black Madonna's mural is intended to represent an ongoing process of confronting the racist assumptions inherent in American Christianity as well as Western knowledge and epistemologies. This layout also established a visual pattern of African American preachers engaging art to convey new theologies. Both Cleage and Boston activist pastor, Dr. Virgil Wood, stand against paintings and symbols to demonstrate the need for cultural revolution and liberation ideologies.<sup>407</sup>

In the "Black Revolution" issue of *Ebony Magazine* published in August of 1969, the Shrine of the Black Madonna mural appears again as a Black Arts Movement symbol. Only a few pages following Larry Neal's definition of the Black Arts Movement, David Lloren's exposé on LeRoi Amiri Baraka featured a photograph of Baraka speaking before the *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural. (Figure 5. 29) In the accompanying caption, Dowdell is credited as the artist behind the Shrine's mural. The caption also frames the mural with these words from Baraka: "If you internalize the white boy's system, you will simply come to his conclusions about the

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<sup>406</sup> Edward B. Fiske, "Black Power Drive Brings Change to Churches," *New York Times* (4 April 1969): 35.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. Fiske directly cites the name change from Central to Shrine of the Black Madonna situated mural as a referential point in the identity of the congregation.

world.”<sup>408</sup> The photographic documentation of Amiri Baraka establishes an associative relationship between the Shrine of the Black Madonna and Harlem’s Black Arts Movement community.

One year after the Black Arts Movement’s visual coronation of the mural and Baraka in *Ebony*, the *Black Madonna and Child* mural is reintroduced in this magazine’s coverage of the evolving discourse of Black Liberation Theology. Eight months before the seminal essay on Black Christ iconography, Black Liberation theology pioneer James Cone penned an essay entitled “Toward a Black Theology.” This essay introduced the ideas outlined in his 1970 book *Black Theology & Black Power* to a broader national audience. The photograph of Pastor Cleage and the mural is the same image published in Poinsett’s 1968 feature “Black Revolt in White Churches.” Although Cone does not directly address the mural or portraits that accompany the text, the inclusion represents the level of recognition and influence between Cleage as Black Liberation Theology practitioner and Cone as Black Liberation systematic theologian. In 1969 and 1970, James Cone delivered lectures at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, thus confirming his encounter with the *Black Madonna and Child* mural.<sup>409</sup>

The history of the circulation of Glanton Dowdell’s mural housed at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 reveals how this specific iconography was accessible to influence American artists. During the 1970s, black women painters such as Mikelle Egozi Fletcher explored the

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<sup>408</sup> David Llorens, “Ameer (LeRoi Jones) Baraka,” *Ebony Magazine*, (Aug 1969): 83. <<https://books.google.com/books?id=AtsDAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA83&dq=black%20madonna%20dowdell&pg=PA82#v=twopage&q&f=false>> (Accessed: May 29, 2016).

<sup>409</sup> Program for First Annual Convention of the Black Christian Nationalist Movement and the Black Preacher’s Conference, April 1- April 5, 1970, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 38, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Johnson Publishing editors also included an image of the mural in their new publication, *Essence Magazine*. *Essence Magazine*’s first Christmas edition in 1970 featured an interview with Cleage that centered around his Black Messiah pronouncements.



potential of this motif.<sup>410</sup> Samella Lewis and Ruth Waddy selected Fletcher's *The Black Madonna* to be reproduced in volume one of the 1976 publication, *Black Artists on Art*.<sup>411</sup> By the end of the 1970s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna expanded to Atlanta where they commissioned Detroit artist Carl Owens to paint an acrylic on wood mural of a Black Madonna and Child in their repurposed movie theater turned church.<sup>412</sup> (Figure 5. 30) As the Shrine of the Black Madonna churches made the *Black Madonna and Child* mural its signature icon of Black Christian Nationalism, highly visible African American artists continued to explore the formal and interpretive significance of the theme through the 1980s as exemplified in Elizabeth Catlett's *Madonna* (1982) and Benny Andrews's *A Portrait of a Black Madonna*.<sup>413</sup> The revisionist visual program of the Shrine of the Black Madonna permeated every facet of image production.

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<sup>410</sup> Samella Lewis, *African American Art and Artists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 156. Mikelle Egozi Fletcher (1945- ) is an African American painter and curator placed Black Arts Movement principles into her art as well as curatorial practice. Black mother and child became her signature subject matter during the 1970s. Lewis's analysis emphasizes Fletcher's belief in the functional role of black art. In 1974, Fletcher curated the art exhibition for the African American Pavilion of Seattle's Black Exposition.

As early as 1971, she presented a Black Madonna and child composition that layer Black Nationalist symbols of ankhs and a black liberation flag.

<sup>411</sup> Samella Lewis and Ruth Waddy, *Black Artists on Art*, Vol. 1 (1976): 77. Samella Lewis (1924- ) is an artist, art historian who is recognized as the first African American woman to earn a doctoral degree in 1951 from Ohio State University. In addition to her extensive body of paintings and prints, Lewis was instrumental in documenting the black artists of the second half of the twentieth century in publications such as *Black artists on Artists, Vol. 1 & Vol. 2*, *Black Arts: an International Quarterly* and *African American Art & Artists*. Ruth Waddy (1909-2003) was a west coast based, primarily self-taught painter who worked with Samella Lewis to edit the *Black Artists on Artists* series.

<sup>412</sup> Carl Owens (1929-2002) was an African American painter born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Following art exhibition in the Shrine of the Black Madonna art gallery during the 1970s, Owens was commissioned to execute a large acrylic on wood black Madonna and child themed mural. The mural remains intact and the church sells reproductions of Owens's studies. The Shrine of the Black Madonna's mural tradition reached its apex in its Houston, Texas Colonial Revival sanctuary. In 1981, Owens was one of four artists selected to contribute to Anheuser-Busch's illustrative print series, *Great Kings and Queens of Africa*. In 1977, a little know Houston muralist, Olu, completed a massive seven panel mural program featuring a contemporary afro-crowned Black Madonna and child, perhaps a rendering of Black Christ with a shepard's staff in Houston's Shrine of the Black Madonna Church.

<sup>413</sup> Gruber, J. Richard., Benny Andrews, and Morris Museum of Art (Augusta, Ga.). *American Icons: From Madison to Manhattan, the Art of Benny Andrews, 1948-1997*. Augusta, Ga.: Morris Museum of Art, 1997. Benny Andrews (1930-2006) was an African American painter, illustrator and mixed media artist who was instrumental in protesting practices of exclusion in American mainstream museums. His artwork centers on his interest in documenting American "folk," from soldiers, to labors and southern communities. Andrews also recorded aspects of his art work in composition like his portrait of Raphael Soyer and Betye

Beyond the Heritage Committee's inaugural mural project, the visual shift was introduced in consistent photographic documentation of Black Christian Nationalism. These photographs of the congregation circulated in the church newsletters such as *Black Nation News* and *Ujamma Kazi*.<sup>414</sup> Church member Bernard Kilpatrick served as editor of the monthly publication. The first issue of *Black Nation News* debuted on April 28, 1969.<sup>415</sup> The newsletter header is anchored by an abstracted black fist that is shackled. This fist made an associative connection to the universal gesture that symbolized opposition to black oppression popularized in the photograph of American Olympians Tommie Smith and John Carlos in silent protest during the 1968 Olympics Games.<sup>416</sup> With the exception of a satirical cartoon, the images from this issue are portraits of Black Nationalists including Cleage and Amiri Baraka. Although the church organ

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Saar. Andrews employed visual form to critique art critics. Benny Andrews was instrumental in founding the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition which gathered a range of African American artist such as Faith Ringgold and Norman Lewis, to formulate strategies to counter inclusionary prejudice against African American artist, curators and art administrators. During the 1960 and 1970s, Andrews actively shaped the discourse around black art by publishing essays high-visible outlets like the *New York Times*.

<sup>414</sup> Alta Harrison (Fundu Difie) "A History of the Shrine of the Black Madonna with a focus on the Development of Printed, Audio and Visual Media," 10, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 11, Folder 15, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. During the 1960s, the Rev. Cleage, his brothers and fellow activists founded the *Illustrated News*. This bi-weekly newsletter offered early expressions of Black Nationalism and promoted grassroots activist mobilization. This publication, which included text and image, was printed on a Universal Three-Color Rotary Press and a Davison Off-Set Press owned by the Rev. Albert Cleage's brother who was a professional printer, Hugh Cleage. Although the *Illustrated News* only ran four years, the equipment was sold to the Shrine of the Black Madonna and was used to begin printing *Black News Nation* in 1969.

<sup>415</sup> *Black Nation News*, (28 Apr 1969):1, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. The first church newsletter was limited in terms of visual material. These components were restricted to portraits, the shackled raised fist and satirical cartoons.

<sup>416</sup> Associated Press photograph, *Freedom: A Photographic History of the African American Struggle*, Manning Marable, Leith Mullings, and Sophie Spencer-Wood, eds., (London: Phaidon Press, 2002) 426-427; Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Tommie Smith (1944- ) and John Carlos (1945- ) were the 200 meter sprinters who won the gold and bronze medals respectively at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. Smith and Carlos used their time on the medal podium as a means of protest by raising a black glove covered fist during the United States National Anthem. While their protest helped politicize the 1968 Olympic games, the men faced harsh public ridicule and were expelled from Olympic Park. As indicated in the wall label text of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smith and Carlos were a part of a large movement of protest among African-American collegiate athletes.

had short four month run in this edition, it established an important precedent for future Black Christian Nationalist publications of the 1970s.

By the mid-1970s, with Shrine communities in Atlanta and Houston and throughout Michigan, the official news organ of the Shrine was renamed *Ujamaa Kazi*.<sup>417</sup> This Swahili rebranding allowed the newly forming the Pan Africanist Orthodox Christian Church denomination to outline a Black Liberation symbol that embodied Black Christian Nationalism.<sup>418</sup> In each issue, this explanation is provided for the name: “Kazi is but one angle of our Liberation Triangle of *Kusanya Watu* (Bring Black People Together), *Ujamaa Kaza* (Communal Work) and *Ujamaa Kodi* (Voluntary Taxation to Build a Black Nation); which are all needed in our continuing struggle to be free.”<sup>419</sup> Mwalimu Karega A. Akinyele served as both editor and photographer. Akinyele’s photographs were selected and organized by Tarik Gebel who supervised editorial design.<sup>420</sup>

Akinyele’s photographs published in *Ujamaa Kazi* employs a masculine imagery to promote notions of Black Nation building. In the two central layouts, images of men at work accompany slogans such as “Work Is Revolutionary!”<sup>421</sup> Across ten photographs by the aforementioned photographer, men are recorded in various states of labor—painting and physically building the infrastructure of the Black Nation. These photographs and others created by Shrine

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<sup>417</sup> *Ujamaa Kazi* cover, 1970, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. During the 1970s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna church rebranded their newsletter to reflect a Pan Africanist oriented agenda.

*Ujamaa Kazi* can be roughly translated as socialism works or communal work.

<sup>418</sup> Black Christian Nationalism was institutionalized in its most complete form in the late twentieth century with the establishment of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church as a denomination. The PAOCC still maintains affiliation with the United Church.

<sup>419</sup> Mwalimu Oba Diallo, “Guest Editorial,” *Ujamaa Kazi* (1970): 2, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 12, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> Lay out of page 5 and 6, *Ujamaa Kazi* cover, 1970s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Across text and photograph, this layout promoted a doctrine of labor and individual sacrifice in the development of the black nation.

of the Black Madonna photographer were exhibited during the 1970s at the Shrine of the Black Madonna Cultural Center and Art Gallery, initially named Karamu Gallery.<sup>422</sup>

The weekly programs or church bulletins distributed at Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 served as a material site where the evolution of Black Christian Nationalist iconography was expressed. Before the unveiling of the mural, the Shrine, #1 used mass produced bulletin covers like most religious communities during this period. These covers would feature reproductions of popular artwork by popular Western artists. For instance, Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951) was used for Sunday service on April 19, 1962.<sup>423</sup> In the years after the Dowdell's mural was unveiled, the church used a photographic reproduction of the chancel mural on weekly bulletins.<sup>424</sup> Other artworks commissioned by the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 such as Jon Onye Lockard's *Black Messiah* also served as a cover image during 1970.<sup>425</sup> Some bulletin cover designs remained anonymous such as the 1972 illustration featuring an ankh against a highly patterned background.<sup>426</sup> Here, the ankh, created with white negative space,

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid, 7. Considering the Rev. Cleage travelled to Cleveland, Ohio consistently, it is likely that Karamu was a reference to Cleveland's Karamu Gallery. Karamu Gallery was the first African American arts center in the nation, established in Cleveland, Ohio in 1915.

<sup>423</sup> Church Bulletin, 19 Apr 1962, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 3, Folder 5, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. This type of mass produced weekly Sunday program cover was popular among American congregations throughout the twentieth century. The Shrine of the Black Madonna ceased using their covers after Dowdell's mural was completed.

<sup>424</sup> A color reproduction of the mural was printed on the Sunday program on my 2014 Sunday site visit.

<sup>425</sup> Church Bulletin, Summer 1970, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 3, Folder 5, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. A color reproduction of this image would also be featured on the convention book for the Third Annual Black Christian Nationalist Convention at Shrine #9 in Atlanta, GA. According to Edward Vaughn, Lockard's *Black Messiah* was submitted as a study in Lockard's efforts to secure the Shrine of the Black Madonna's chancel mural commission. This 1970 weekly service program featured John Lockard's rendering of a black Christ with a crown of thorns. Perhaps this composition responds to Marcus Garvey's call for images of a Black Madonna and a Black Man of Sorrows.

<sup>426</sup> Church Bulletin, 10 Sept 1972, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Box 3, Folder 5, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan. Some of the designs featured on the weekly bulletins covers remain anonymous. These images demonstrate an awareness of specific popular Pan Africanist iconography.

contains the initials for Black Christian Nationalism. This symbol is imposed upon a highly patterned background created by lines and interconnected geometric shapes.<sup>427</sup>

The use of African symbols such as the Egyptian ankh reflect the influence of Afrocentrism on Black Christian Nationalism during the 1970s. The Rev. Cleage's 1972 book, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Direction for the Black Church* included a recommended books list that featured several texts that document African religious paradigms such as Yosef ben-Jochannan's *Black Man of the Nile* (1970) and *African Origins of the Major "Western Religions"* (1970), as well as John S. Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). Ben-Jochannan defined the ankh's significance for *Black World Magazine* as the "Key of Life (original Cross, corrupted by the Christians of Rome)."<sup>428</sup> In 1968, *Life Magazine* published several images of ankh iconography from Egyptian tombs across a five part series.<sup>429</sup> By 1971, the ankh was highly fashionable as evidenced by jewelry advertisements from *Ebony Magazine*.<sup>430</sup> Black Christian Nationalist clothing such as t-shirts or clothing patches incorporated the symbol in designs. The BCN patch consists of a black equilateral triangle framed with red and black lines. In the red frame, each arm of the triangle bears the words: umoja, ujamaa and uhuru,

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<sup>427</sup> These Afrocentric elements may also reflect the impact of AfriCobra aesthetic as exemplified by artists like Wadsworth Jarrell and James Phillips. These artists placed African derived symbols alongside text to convey Black Nationalist ideas.

<sup>428</sup> "Fundamental Steps to Historical Analysis: An Interview with Yosef ben-Joachannan" *Black World* (Feb 1974): 66, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=ojkDAAAAMBAlpg=PA66&dq=ankh&pg=PA66#v=onepage&q=ankh&f=false>> (Accessed: May 30, 2016).

<sup>429</sup> Tom Prideaux, "Ancient Egypt, Part V," *Life Magazine* (7 Jun 1968): 78, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=3lQEAAAAMBAlpg=PA75&dq=ankh&pg=PA75#v=onepage&q=ankh&f=false>> (Accessed: June 1, 2016).

<sup>430</sup> Gold Medal Department Advertisement, *Ebony Magazine* (Jan 1971): 113, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=V9oDAAAAMBAlpg=PA113&dq=ebony%20magazine%20ankh&pg=PA114#v=onepage&q=ebony%20magazine%20ankh&f=false>> (Accessed: June 2, 2016).

An ankh and BCN are stitched on the central black triangle. The ankh was even incorporated in to church emblems, as seen in this Black Christian Nationalist fashion patch from the 1970s.<sup>431</sup>

The Sunday bulletin from April 1, 1975 is an additional example of the Shrine of the Black Madonna's application of Pan-Africanist aesthetic.<sup>432</sup> In this case, African Diaspora mask iconography of the Black Atlantic becomes a metaphorical reference and motif in art promoted by the Black Christian Nationalist Movement. The cover image is a photograph of a wooden mask in the form of an abstracted frontal face, crowned by two heads rendered in profile. The mask design bears similarities to Yoruba *Epa Masks*.<sup>433</sup> In the mask on the Sunday bulletin, the central face corresponds with the signature design elements of the *Black Madonna* in terms of value and planar flattening. As the Black Arts Movement blossomed in the Detroit during the mid-1960s, African art was exhibited in spaces and publications created for Afro-Americans. In August 1967, the International Afro-American Museum's Mobile Museum debuted with a five part exhibition entitled *African Art and Its History* that featured varieties of masks from west and central Africa.<sup>434</sup> Installed across five trailers, this exhibition also visited eighteen local churches.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Black Christian Nationalist clothing patch, c. 1970s, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>432</sup> Church Bulletin, 1 Apr 1975, the Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr. Papers, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan.

<sup>433</sup> William Fagg, "An Epa Mask from North-East Yorubaland," *The British Museum Quarterly* 15 (1941): 109-11.; Anthony Shelton, "A YORUBA EPA MASK BY FASIKU ALAYE." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, no. 10 (1998): 121-24; Unidentified artist, Epa Masks Representing A Man and Woman, n.d. , University of California, San Diego Collection, ARTStore Slide Gallery. The style of the Epa mask defined by the superimposition of various human forms into one unified form appear to have inspired the design of the mask on the 1975 Sunday weekly program.

<sup>434</sup> Mabel O. Wilson, "To Make a Black Museum," *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) 279-281.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*, 250-251; 280-281. The African art exhibition was curated by Dr. Audrey Smedly (1930- ) is an anthropologist who conducted field work in Nigeria. During the early years of her career, she was a professor at Detroit's Wayne State University. Dr. Smedley was instrumental in the development of the Charles Wright Museum of African American History.

By the 1970s, the Shrine of the Black Madonna opened Karamu Gallery under the auspices of their Shrine Cultural Center.<sup>436</sup> In the Shrine Art Galleries, African art was prominently displayed and available for purchase. Johnson Publishing magazine *Black World* records the Afrocentric cultural shift. *Black World Magazine* published an essay by a young doctoral candidate, Roland E. Bush, entitled “Negritude: a Sense of Reality.”<sup>437</sup> This essay provides some insight into how black poets and visual artists were employing the African mask as a trope. Bush puts forth this rationale:

Since the mask embodies the force of the ancestors, and in African ontology the ancestors are directly concerned about their descendants, the static, changeless appearance of the mask symbolizes the perennial wisdom, influence, and presence of the ancestors. The mask, in other words, *functions* as a force that localizes, in both time and space, the poet’s celebration of his authentic roots. Moreover, the term “function” is important, for it distinguishes African art, traditional and contemporary, as an attitude, a purposeful act, in contradistinction to any European *l’art pour l’art*.<sup>438</sup>

Akin to Negritude poets, African American artists throughout the twentieth century maintained a tradition of utilizing west and central African mask design aesthetics to express a Pan-Africanist identity. African American religious communities such as the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 circulated mask iconography during the late twentieth century with similar intentions.

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<sup>436</sup> A 1973 event poster shows the use of the same anonymous mask-like sculpture to visually represent a Karamu Gallery event.

<sup>437</sup> Roland E. Bush, “Negritude: A Sense of Reality,” *Black World Magazine* (Nov 1972): 44-45, <<https://books.google.com/books?id=MToDAAAAMBAAJ&lpg=PA45&dq=african%20mask&pg=PA45#v=onepage&q=african%20mask&f=false>> (Accessed: June 4, 2016). Bush defines Negritude as a movement of individual that “. . . were the creators and supporters, protectors and guardians of a unique view of life, a separate sense of reality, which, in the absence of viable political , gave direct expression to the Black man’s perception of the world and the validity of his own cultural identity. It is this Black *Weltanschauung*, different from and diametrically opposed to the artificial reality of European colonialism or neo-colonialism. . .” Developed during the first quarter of the twentieth century across sites throughout the African Diaspora including Paris, Negritude was a philosophical and cultural movement that fueled black liberation movements worldwide.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 played an integral role in the cultural and visual revolution of both the Black Liberation Theology and Black Arts Movement. As the mother church of a denomination, this religious community commissioned and circulated art that communicated new philosophies and interpretations of Christianity. Beginning with Glanton Dowdell's chancel mural, the art affiliated with this church set out to cultivate a criticality that resulted in cultural empowerment. The history behind the *Black Madonna and Child* reveals an iconographic intervention in African American art, where image and rhetoric invested Negro or Brown Mother and Child imagery with radical Christian meaning.

The central intent of this chapter has been to trace the cultural work of Dowdell's mural when photographically reproduced. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 extended their aesthetic transformation to the photography published in church newsletters and weekly church bulletins. This chapter offered a focused analysis of this community's art activities in Detroit. But it should be noted this does not account for extensive art histories of Shrine of the Black Madonna churches in other Michigan sites, Atlanta and Houston. Another important aspect of this art history that needs to be explored is a gendered analysis of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural reception. How did African American female artists such as Artis Lane, Emma Amos and Sharon Dunn feel about the use of black maternal iconography for Black Nationalist ends?<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Artis Lane and California African-American Museum, *A Woman's Journey: The Life and Work of Artis Lane*, (Los Angeles, Calif.: California African American Museum, 2007); Farrington, Lisa E. *Creating Their Own Image : The History of African-American Women Artists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 149-150; 157-162. Artis Lane (1927- ) is one of the most prolific African American portrait artists of the second half of the twentieth century. She was educated at Ontario College of Art as well as Cranbrook Art Academy, outside of Detroit Michigan. She recalls being one of the earliest African



The history of the *Black Madonna and Child* mural also confirms the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as pioneering space in the Black Arts Movement. The same art mobilization that christens Black Arts Movements capitals of Harlem and Chicago occurred at Detroit's Shrine of the Black Madonna as early as 1967.<sup>440</sup> The extent of the influence from this community on the African American art world at large has yet to be documented.

This case study marshaled textual, photographic and fine art as evidence of the Shrine of the Black Madonna's pioneering role as an incubator for the ideological, theological and cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s. While the focus of these two chapters examined the mother church of Black Christian Nationalism, or as it is referred to today, Pan African Orthodox

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American women students in both art institutions. Lane develop a strong public reputation as a portrait artist receiving commissions from former President Ronald Reagan and former First Lady Barbara Bush as well as a host of entertainment celebrities and civil rights leaders. In 1991, Lane's bronze bust of Rosa Parks was collected by the National Portrait Gallery. She is the first African American female sculptress to have a composition, her Sojourner Truth bust, placed in the United States Capitol. Although she is popularly known for her portraits, she has explored more conceptual expressions of the human form in her *Emerge* series. Emma Amos (1938- ) is an Atlanta born painter and mixed media artist that developed her aesthetic and feminist sensibilities during her time in 1960s New York City. After her education at Antioch College in Ohio as well as London, she earned a master's degree from New York University. During this time, she was admitted into the Spiral Group, a predominantly African American art collective founded by Romare Bearden, Hale Woodruff, Norman Lewis and others. Her experience of isolation from African American women artists and difficulty breaking into the New York art scene established a foundation for her painted quilts of the early 1990s such as *Tightrope* (1994) and *Worksuit*(1994) that equate to visual feminist manifestos. Amos served on the editorial board of the feminist organ *Heresies* and worked with women artist's organizations such as Fantastic Women in the Art and Women Action Coalition. Sharon Dunn (1946- ) is Boston muralist and art educator who was at the forefront of producing black feminist murals during the early 1970s. Her signature artwork is *Maternity*, a mural partially funded by National Endowment for the Art. This vibrant mural was painted on a structure that faced a public housing complex. *Maternity* feature both figurative and abstracted representations of black mothers engaged in various stages of child-rearing. Dunn completed this mural (now destroyed) as a young mother. Dunn also created art for feminist books such as bell hook's 1984 text, *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center*.

<sup>440</sup> Mary Schmidt Campbell, "Chronology of Events (1963-1973)," *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963-1973* (New York, N.Y.: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1985); Pinder, "Black Liberation Theology, Black Power and the Black Arts Movement at Trinity United Church of Christ, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, 69-98. Harlem is home to some of the earliest Black Arts Movement such as Weusi's founding in 1964. But the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 precedes Midwestern activities such as *The Wall of Respect* (summer of 1967 in Chicago) as well as Northwestern University's Conference on the Functional Aspects of Black Art (CONFABA) of 1968. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 precedes the Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology synthesis of the 1980s at the Rev. Jeremiah Wright's Trinity United Church of Christ explored in Kymberly Pinder's *Painting the Gospel Black: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*.

Christian Church, it is important to recognize this religious communities established churches and cultural centers throughout Michigan, and cities including Cleveland.<sup>441</sup> Today, the Shrine of the Black Madonna properties are maintained in Detroit, Atlanta, Houston and a farm compound in northwestern South Carolina. In fact, as early as 1979, the Rev. Cleage devised strategies for Beulah Land, a multi-acre farming community that could ideally sustain the denomination. The spaces also have the potential to reveal new material histories.

This case study demonstrates the potential of examining how Black Nationalist ideologies permanently transformed the American urban landscape, beyond the public mural history. Members of the Shrine of the Black Madonna confronted normative aesthetic practice in repurposing Classical Revival architecture and displacing white representations of divinity. The initial stylistic rupture and redefinition at the Shrine of Black Madonna, #1 was sustained in denominational aesthetic practices. The examination found across chapters four and five outlines one of the earliest considerations of a Black Nationalist material culture that shifted the meaning and shape of black space.

In the seminal anthology edited by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Crawford entitled *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, the editors argue that revisionist histories of the Black Arts Movement should consider new geographic centers to chart the development of the movement.<sup>442</sup> The Shrine of the Black Madonna Church, #1 forged their own landscape of black radical identity rooted in Pan Africanist, Christian beliefs. This religious community affirms the interpretation of the African American Protestant church as a cultural repository, as it sustains acquired structures and transformative art to define future generations of the Black Nation.

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<sup>441</sup> At the peak of expansion, there were eight Shrine of the Black Madonna Churches in Michigan.

<sup>442</sup> Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford, *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2006).



Figure 5.1. Glanton Dowdell, *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural, 1967, oil on canvas, photograph by James Ribbron, 2016.

Completed four months before Chicago's *Wall of Respect*, this mural inaugurated the Black Arts Movement mural movement. This artwork marks the aesthetic contribution of Christian communities in making visual interventions rooted in Black Liberation Theology.



Figure 5.2. Jon Onye Lockard, *Black Messiah*, c. 1967, pastel on canvas, gift of Joseph and Mary Stevens, Grand State Valley University Art Gallery.

This composition was originally submitted for consideration during the commission selection process for the chancel mural. Lockard would go on to reproduce this artwork and other Black Messiah imagery. The community at the Shrine of the Black Madonna cultivated artists like Lockard who would dedicate his career to defining and producing black art.



Figure 5.3. "Art on Display," Unidentified newspaper article, n.d. General George Baker Papers, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976, microfilm collection at Library of Congress.

This undated newspaper article is one of the few photographic documentations of Dowdell in his prison studio. The art reproduced attests to the artist's figurative style and role as art instructor.



Figure 5.4. Detail “Art on Display,” Unidentified newspaper article, n.d. General George Baker Papers, Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1965-1976, microfilm collection at Library of Congress.

This artwork documents the artist’s explorations in tonal value during his incarceration.



Figure 5.5. Detail of Glanton Dowdell, *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural, 1967, oil on canvas, photograph by James Ribbron, 2016.

This detail of the mural exhibits the use of tonal gradation that recalled design strategies employed by Harlem Renaissance painter, Aaron Douglas.



Figure 5.6. Glanton Dowdell, *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural, 1967, oil on canvas, photograph by James Ribbron, 2016.

The horizontal black outline of a city symbolizes the Black Nation the congregation worked to realize. This feature also establishes chromatic unity in the composition.



UNTITLED (BLACK MADONNA)

You were beautiful when  
Your apparition formed  
From Tanga mud and Rift;  
Rocks of Rhodesia, Kush Ethiopia,  
Sahara sands and Maya mounds,  
And Grottes des Enfants,  
Preserved your image.

You modeled  
At the Pharaoh's throne;  
Mother of Horus—  
Mother of Krishna—  
Mother of All!  
In dark Virginity.


You, lost for a while  
In the geometry of the crescent star,  
Continued in obscure worship of the North  
Among many who never knew your birth  
Yet still adored you.

DaVinci, and Angelo, wiped you white  
Releasing floods of forgotten nights;  
But you remained beautiful still  
In the dim deeds of masters who made you mistress;  
And bred through pale pleasure,  
Your sons denied you.

Free winds winding South  
To storm Bahia and Haiti  
Took root in  
Shiloh—Bombay—and Ghana;  
Bandung announced your return.

Now again we sense your  
Sensitive beauty, smiling, Black,  
Turban crowned, robed, straight back,  
Very Black—and Brown and Beige too,  
Singing strong songs of *Negritude*  
Through coffee lips your vibrant Blues.

Harold G. Lawrence



52 June 1962 NEGRO DIGEST

Figure 5.7. Harold G. Lawrence and LeRoy Foster, "Untitled (Black Madonna)," *Negro Digest* (June 1962): 52.

This broadside influenced Edward Vaughn and the minds behind the mural. The illustration of Mary may have offered Dowdell a point of departure for his design.



Figure 5.8. "Negro Artists Win Top U.S. Honors," *Life Magazine*, (22 Jul 1946): 63.

This layout exemplifies the type of African American art Dowdell, Cleage and Vaughn may have encountered as conceptual and aesthetic inspiration for the chancel mural.



**Rose Waldron** (left) is a top Detroit model who posed for the now famous *Black Madonna* painting which graces that city's Shrine of the Black Madonna church.

Figure 5.9. *Rose Waldron*, 1970, *Ebony Magazine*, (May 1970): 156, as republished on GoogleBooks.

Photographs of Detroit Afro Modern fashion model, Rose Waldon, housed in Albert Cleage's papers at the University of Michigan, Bentley Library, document her in the church posing for photographic studies for the artist.

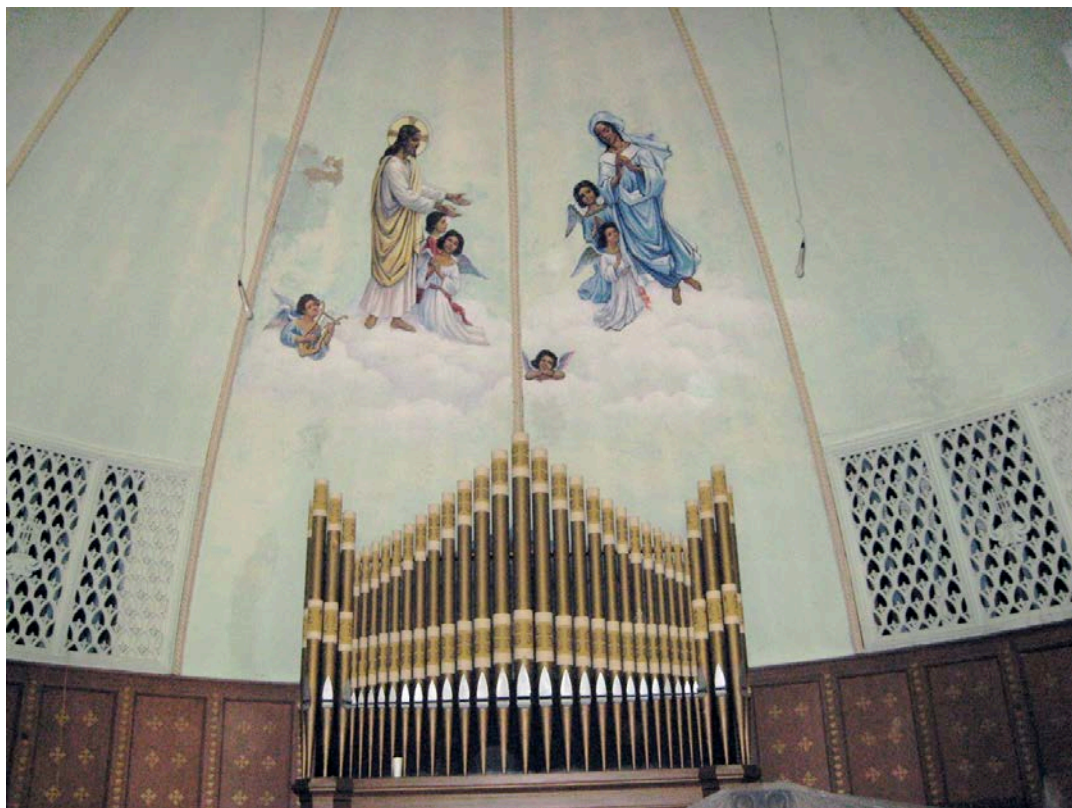


Figure 5.10. Proctor Chisholm, *Black Christ and Mary*, oil on plaster, 1904, Quinn AME Chapel, photograph by Christopher Brancaccio.

In 1903, Proctor Chisholm executed the earliest known Black Christ and Madonna mural in the United States. It is highly probable that the minds behind the Dowdell's mural were influenced by this Chicago mural as Cleage and Dowdell spent extensive time in Chicago.



Figure 5.11. Winnold Reiss, *The Brown Madonna*, 1925, pastel on paper, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

During the New Negro Renaissance in Harlem, artists answered Marcus Garvey's call for a Black Madonna and Black Man of Sorrows. For some artists not directly affiliated with the Garvey Movement, Brown Madonna imagery communicated the idea of redefinition and regeneration associated with New Negro philosophies.



Figure 5.12. Alma Parks, “A City Survey: The Arts in Detroit,” *Negro Digest* (November 1962): 84.

This photograph was published as a representation of the “African Madonna” imagery that was gaining popularity in Detroit during the 1960s.



Figure 5.13. Ronald Harrison, *The Black Christ*, 1962, oil on canvas, National Gallery of South Africa, as republished in Ronald Harrison, *Ebony Magazine* (Jan 1963): 82.

Black Christ art as a means of protest was best publicized in the case of the South African painter Roland Harrison. He was harassed by the Apartheid government and was forced to smuggle to his painting out of the country to secure its safety. The story was covered in American news outlets and African American publications like *Ebony*.



*Mrs. Ward shows parts of church to Shabazz kids (l-r) Ilyasah, 5; Qubilah, 6; Malikah; Attallah, 8; Malaak; and Gamilah, 3.*

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Figure 5.14. Johnson publication photograph (Roy Lewis) featuring Black Madonna from "National Report: Prof. Notes Negroes Gifts at Detroit's Confab," *Jet Magazine* (3 August 1967): 4-5.

Here, the children of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz stand before the mural with Black Arts Movement thespian and writer, Val Gray Ward. This image reinforces the theme of generational advancement and child rearing established in the mural.





## THE BLACK REVOLT IN WHITE CHURCHES

*Militants attack  
phony integration,  
blindness to ghetto*

BY ALEX POINSETT

"THIS IS a voluntary society. Nobody had a gun on them. Nobody forced them to join. So what are they complaining about?" The insistent question comes from a white member of a predominantly white Chicago church. He is tongue-lashing what to him is a show of ingratitude by black fellow members, who have set up a "black caucus" and—audacity of audacities—barred whites from weekly meetings on the church's premises. Some of the blacks have been "integrated" into the church since 1954, but now they are getting themselves together and "doing their thing." Along with fellow black Unitarian-Universalists across the country, they are revolting against racism both within their denomination and in the nation.

The "Uni-Uni" uprising is part of a larger eruption of black folks who, like ancient Jonah, are challenging refuge in the body of a whale. Rejecting white paternalism, they insist on self-determination. This had been the mood of the Meredith marchers two years ago. Then the mood of ghetto rebels and campus militants. Now black folks swallowed up in white churches—Methodists, Lutherans, United Presbyterians, Episcopalians, American Baptists, United Church of Christ and Roman Catholics—burn with what historian Vincent Harding calls "The Religion of Black Power."

Some wear African *dandakis* and "love beads." Some wear their hair in its "happy state." Some challenge a "white, middle-

The Rev. Albert B. Cleage Jr., United Church of Christ minister in Detroit, a Black nationalist Christian minister, says his stand boosted attendance at his church from 50 to 900 in a matter of weeks.

Figure 5.15. Unidentified photographer, *The Rev. Albery B. Cleage*, (photograph of the Rev. Albert Cleage in the pulpit) from Alex Poinsett, "Black Revolt in White Churches: Militants Attack Phony Integration, Blindness to Ghetto," *Ebony Magazine* (Sep 1968): 62.

By the late 1960s, the Rev. Cleage was one of the most visible Black Nationalist ministers in the U.S. He is often represented before the mural affirming his affiliation with the Black Arts Movement and Black Liberation Theology.



Black Madonna and child is 9 by 14-foot painting by Detroit artist Gerson Dowdell. It stands in chancel of Rev. Albert Cleage's Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit.



Black Christ is central figure of lunette just which fills dome of St. Cecilia Church in Detroit. Painting was formally unveiled in November before an awed, overflow crowd.

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**BLACK CHRIST** *Continued*

na and a white Christ and replace them with black Madonnas and black Christs for their children's training. One of Carvey's aged followers had gratefully offered her African Orthodox pastor five dollars for telling her of the black Christ. It was clear to her that "no white man would ever die on the cross for me."

Notions about the color of Jesus became a public scandal two years ago during and after Detroit's massive black rebellion. Raging around a gray stone statue of the Messiah at Sacred Heart Seminary, the issue silently counterpointed the looting and burning that occurred only a few blocks away. First, three black men blackened the statue's face, hands and feet. Then a month later, while Detroit Catholics argued over its color, three white men repainted it white. "The next afternoon," recalls Msgr. Francis Canfield, the seminary's rector, "we heard a sound truck going up and down the street saying that our priests had repainted the statue white. I don't know who ran the sound truck, but I took counsel at the chancery, and the decision was reached that we should repaint it black . . ."

But perhaps their decision was simply another way of taking out fire insurance, rather than any sincere belief that Christ was a black man. So contends 57-year-old Rev. Albert B. Cleage Jr., handsome pastor of the 1,000-member Shrine of the Black Madonna (formerly Central United Church of Christ) in Detroit and foremost exponent of a black Christology. A one-time close friend of Malcolm X, his reddish hair, reddish complexion and laser beam eyes suggest an incarnation of the murdered prophet of Black Power. As it was with Malcolm, life is a "tilly" proposition for Rev. Cleage. Reportedly, a \$100,000 assassination price rides on his head and he travels in parts of Detroit with bodyguards. Yet, the threat of death apparently neither stays his hand nor his tongue.

Some of Malcolm's polemical fire comes

Figure 5.16. Layout of Alex Poinsett, "The Quest for Black Christ," *Ebony Magazine* (Mar: 1969): 172.

Dowdell's chancel mural was recognized for initiating a shift in Christian iconography with the development of Black Christian Nationalism.

self-aware and in empowering life to become what God wills that it might be.”



**Sketches for Black Madonna** were examined by Rev. Cleage by artist Glanton Dowdell before project was completed. Minister feels present crisis involving black man's survival in America demands resurrection of a black Messiah.

Figure 5.17. Unidentified photographer, *Sketches for Black Madonna*, from Alex Poinsett, “The Quest for Black Christ,” *Ebony Magazine* (Mar: 1969): 178(Accessed: July 15, 2016).

*Ebony Magazine*'s article on black Christ imagery concluded with this photograph of Dowdell and the Rev. Cleage discussing preliminary sketches. It should be noted they are the only patron and artist photographed for the story.

**Black Power Drive Brings Change to Churches**



A parishioner at the Blue Hill Soul Center in the Roxbury section of Boston sings out during the service.



Negro women at prayer. Changes in Negro attitudes reflect growing self-consciousness.

BY EDWARD B. FISKE  
Fifteen black seminarians at the Colgate-Buchester Divinity School locked themselves in an administration building last month and asked questions by the administration to let them name nine Negro trustees. Alongside the stately wooden cross at the Blue Hill Soul Center in the Roxbury section of Boston are a crucifix and a short rope in the shape of a noose.

"The noose is the evil that blacks have endured, and the crucifix is how we've had to huddle along in the absence of power to deal with it," said the Rev. Virgil Wood, pastor at the center.

These and dozens of similar incidents are the visible signs of changing attitudes among the two million Negroes in predominantly white Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

Hundreds of black laymen, clergymen and nuns have banded together in national caucuses to push for increased decision-making power in their particular churches. Many are expressing with African liturgical forms and talking of interfaith alliances dubbed "total ecumenism."

Even more fundamentally, Negro scholars are actively redefining basic Christian teachings into theologies of black power. In some cases this is accompanied by a rejection of the Bible in the respect of Negroes but in the majority of white Christians.

Black theology is the only genuine emancipation of Christianity in America today," said the Rev. James H. Cone, a 30-year-old Methodist theologian who will join the faculty of Union Theological Seminary next fall.

"White theology is Christian," he said. "In all-black churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church which have the allegiance of the majority of the country's black Protestants, such ideas have not taken root, largely because of a tradition of conservative leadership and the fact that they are already self-sufficient."

**Many Whites Sympathetic**  
For their part, white church leaders have generally reacted with sympathy to the new black awareness. Edwin R. M. Eby, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, for instance, said that it was "certainly healthy that black thinkers are thinking in terms of theologies that are relevant to their experience."

He added, however, that "we should distinguish between Christian teachings and the failure of many in the churches to live up to them."

Like the black power movement in general, the changes in Negro religious attitudes



The Rev. Albert R. Cleage Jr., of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, a Detroit church associated with United Church of Christ, the same Jesus was a "revolutionary black leader."

any other institution in the black community, will rise or fall on the basis of its capacity to understand the voice of black power," said the Rev. Mera Griffin, executive secretary of the National Council of Black Churches, which was founded two years ago to spur black consciousness in the churches.

Like Negro leaders in other seminaries and graduate departments in the country and Canada from 1953 to 1963.

Figures in the area are generally optimistic, but a New York Times survey of 11 major Protestant denominations, including several with large Southern constituencies, showed that Negroes made up an average of 2 per cent of the communicants.

Some recent efforts have been made to correct the situation. The Most Rev. Richard K. Ferris, for instance, became two years ago the first black Catholic bishop in this country in modern times.

Figure 5.18. Layout of Jack Manning photographs in Edward B. Fiske, "Black Power Drive Brings Change to Churches," *New York Times* (4 April 1969): 35.

Jack Manning's photograph of the Rev. Cleage introduced a gestural aspect to the pattern of representing the activist before the mural. The juxtaposition of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 mural with one at Boston's Blue Hill Black Nationalist congregation affirms the revision of African American visual culture as a necessary aspect of Black Nationalism.

**Ameer Baraka**, beneath Glanton Dowdell's famous painting at Detroit's Shrine of the Black Madonna, cautions SRO audience: "If you internalize the white boy's system, you will simply come to his conclusions about the world."



Figure 5.19. David Llorens, "Ameer (LeRoi Jones) Baraka," *Ebony Magazine*, (Aug: 1969): 83.

This photograph can be interpreted as marking the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 as the sacred site in the Black Art Movement landscape. The pairing of BAM luminary Amiri Baraka was an effective endorsement of this religious community.



Figure 5.20. Carl Owens, *Black Madonna*, 1970s, acrylic on wood, Shrine of the Black Madonna, #7, Atlanta Georgia.

As the Shrine of the Black Madonna churches expanded across the eastern region of the country, they commissioned Detroit born artist Carl Owen to paint a mural in the same theme for their retrofitted movie theater church in the Westend neighborhood of Atlanta.

**CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: THE BLACK CHURCH AS CULTURAL UNIT:  
RECOVERING THE MATERIAL AND VISUAL COSMOS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
SELF-DETERMINATION**

Across these pages, the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Shrine of Black Madonna, #, 1 Pan African Orthodox Christian Church have been documented as religious and cultural spaces that defined and nurtured a tradition of Black Nationalism. Although these two religious communities practiced and promoted different conceptions of Black Nationalism, they reveal an aesthetic tradition that contains historic accounts of the material strivings for socio-cultural advancement. This study commenced by offering a methodological rationale for this investigation of African American religious architecture and art, in an effort to fill a void in the academic literature. Beginning with Boston's African Meeting House, the oldest surviving church erected in 1805 by an African American congregation, various religious communities sustained an established practice of creating and claiming space advanced by a subsequent generation of churches like Metropolitan AME Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1. This material legacy centers on intentional selections in architectural and aesthetic style as an integral means of self-determination.

The first case study on Metropolitan AME Church outlined material and visual creative production that reflects the concerns and advancement of African Americans, both nationally and locally. From its completion in 1886, Metropolitan AME Church's Gothic Revival edifice and sacred space have been continuously layered with art and actions that expressed the growth of Classical Black Nationalism during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the oldest African American owned structure in downtown Washington, D.C., this congregation preserves this national platform for not only the AME denomination but the African American race at large. This site continues to accumulate the historic material residue of one hundred and thirty years as

an ideal stage for African American leaders. As a photographic subject, Metropolitan AME documents the local everyday functions of the space as well as the grand ceremonies that attracted national attention. The church houses a collection of art objects ranging from a stained glass window program to paintings by African American artists including documentation of two non-existent murals.

The second half of this dissertation examined the aesthetic progression from Black Cultural Nationalism to Black Christian Nationalism at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 in Detroit, Michigan. The story behind the current site of this religious community offers a common approach to claiming space in real estate acquisition. As the modern civil rights movement gained momentum in the late 1950s, the congregation that would rename itself the Shrine of the Black Madonna purchased a 1925 Colonial Revival structure in 1957 which would be transformed, through action and aesthetics. There a body of Christian activists brought about a shift in the urban landscape of Detroit. During this period, Detroit was characterized by persistent injustice and socio-economic disparities. By altering, the ownership and social function of the site, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 established a sphere of influence that promoted the ideals of the Black Arts Movement as well as Black Liberation Theology.

Akin to Metropolitan AME Church, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 utilized mural painting to communicate theological and social positions. Diverging from Metropolitan AME Church's 1950s Classical Black Nationalist white Christ mural, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 expanded the bounds of this religious art medium to articulate a revolution in ideology and theology in the case of Glanton V. Dowdell's *Black Madonna and Child* chancel mural. This case study introduced material and visual evidence of an under-recognized cultural site that cultivated



a Black Arts Movement aesthetic and inspired a generation of an artistic practice rooted in resistance and self-determination.

These two churches share similarities in their expressions of self-determination ideologies. In one of the earliest anthologies to define Black Nationalism, the authors offer this historical lineage for a notion self-determination:

Bishop Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was atypical. Known particularly as a flamboyant colonizationist, he also used the pages of his newspaper *Voice of Missions*, to advocate other controversial ideas. Among them was the assertion that God was black. This, like this emigrationist ideology, reflected a belief that Negroes could achieve racial dignity and pride only by rejecting American society and culture. Not unnaturally, therefore, this idea has cropped up several times since among militant separatist philosophies—most notable those of Marcus Garvey, the Black Muslims and in the late 1960s, of Detroit minister, Albert Cleage, pastor of the Shrine of the Black Madonna.<sup>443</sup>

Both religious spaces are sheathed in popular American architectural styles. But the lived history of Metropolitan AME Church and the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 added new meaning to their respective styles by exploring liberation strategies in the congregations' events and aesthetics. Each site reveals an extensive visual history that augments the standing African American art historical discourse. This examination moves closer toward discerning a broader sense of art history that contextualizes material traditions and offers an expansive sense of African American art.

The interpretive conclusions of this dissertation attest to the efficacy of the aesthetic-material analytical approach exercised in this dissertation. The visual and material histories contained in African American churches augment and complicate the parochial linear progression

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<sup>443</sup> John H. Bracey, August Meier, and Elliott M. Rudwick, "Race Pride, Race Solidarity," *Black Nationalism in America*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 123; Bishop Henry McNeal Turner was known for his promotion of African Americans immigrating to Africa. In his 1895 essay, "The American Negro and his Fatherland," Tuner asserts, "There is no manhood future in the United States for the Negro. He may eke out an existence for generations to come, but he can never be a man—full, symmetrical and undwarfed." Turner's views were viewed as extreme by Bishops in the AME denomination.

of art history based on master-artists and master-artworks. African American religious spaces should be understood as epistemological spaces that introduce and normalize a sense of community and a cultural way of looking. This postulation is confirmed by observations outlined in the writing of black feminist scholars.

Feminist philosopher, bell hooks, elucidates the notion of the aesthetics of the everyday life of African Americans by comparing Buddhist spatial design and African American interior design:

[The Buddhist monk was] moved by an aesthetic shaped by old beliefs. Objects are not without spirit. As living things they touch us in unimagined ways. On this path one learned that an entire room is a space to be created, a space that can reflect beauty, peace, and a harmony of being, a spiritual aesthetic. Each space is a sanctuary...Aesthetics then is more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming...Whatever African-Americans created...it was regarded as a testimony, bearing witness, challenging racist think which suggested that black folks were not fully human, were uncivilized and that the measure of this was our collective failure to create 'great' art.<sup>444</sup>

Akin to the ways in which African American domestic spaces served as canvas for visual self-definition and instruction in southern African American communities, this study presents the black church as a space where cultural skills such as learning to look and cultivating an attention to beauty are central. When critically examining the consistent presence of male protagonists in the archival sources and histories detailed in this examination, this dissertation has presented accounts that seemingly paint women as playing a minor role in shaping African American religious art practice. This concluding chapter will briefly reflect on methodological obstacles and interpretive challenges posited by black feminist discourse concerning the function of black space. This study will end by reviewing select art historical findings that call for exploring new aspects of African American religious visual and material culture.

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<sup>444</sup> bell hooks, "The Aesthetics of Blackness: Strange and Oppositional," *Belonging: a Culture of Place*, (New York: Routledge, 2009) 122-123.

### **Methodological Reflection: Research Variables and Questions Posed by Feminism**

In the earliest phases of this research in 2013, the scope of this study included four African American churches.<sup>445</sup> The success and failure of these examinations rested on the issue on archival access. In the case of Metropolitan AME Church, I was granted almost unrestricted access to the on-site archives. The researcher's position to or relationship with Metropolitan AME Church could be defined by Patricia Hill-Collins's concept of "outsider within," which she defined thirteen years after her original description as follows: "I now use the term *outsider-within* to describe social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power. Individuals claim identities as "outsiders within" by their placement in these social locations. Thus, outsider-within identities are situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social injustice."<sup>446</sup> Here, Hill-Collins posits an analytical perspective that informs the evaluation in this study.

First, the author of this dissertation was socialized in the African American Protestant church during her childhood. While this resulted in advantages in the case of the AME Church, in the case of other denominations such as the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church and the Church of God in Christ, the study was conducted from an outsider's perspective. This distance was established through restriction to sites as well as official institutional archives. During site visits to the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, I assumed the outsider within positionality joining the religious community in Sunday religious service. Hill-Collins's reflection of "outsider within" affirms the necessity of the historical methodology that undergirds this dissertation to balance

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<sup>445</sup> In the initial phase of research, this dissertation documented and interpreted the material and visual history of Metropolitan AME Church, Abyssinian Baptist Church (New York, New York), Mason Temple Church of God in Christ (Memphis, TN) and Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1.

<sup>446</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, "Reflections on the Outsider Within," *Journal of Career Development*, Vol. 26 (Fall 1999):86.

variable of on-site research. Feminist interpretations of space advocate for a consideration of power and a dynamic sense of identity when examining cultural space.

Beyond addressing the positionality of the researcher, black feminist literature insists on the evaluation of aesthetics in private and public African American space. Following the definition of outsider within by Hill Collins, this dissertation has evaluated African American churches as “social locations [and] border spaces of social injustice.”<sup>447</sup> As argued in the introductory chapter, African American spaces dedicated to religious expression are among the earliest spaces of self-determination in response to discrimination. Metropolitan AME continues to be a “border space” devoted to African Americans. But in this space, the congregation welcomes allies that contest oppressive unequal social practice. The Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, on the other hand, redefines a traditional mainstream white architectural tradition to facilitate the development of a Black Nation separate from dominant white culture. In addition to promoting a visual culture, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is a material testament that continued to extend the epistemological intervention of the Black Nationalism.

This study has represented African American churches as sites that not only effectively grafted their identity into the structures, but also engaged in the act of cultivating aesthetic awareness among generations of congregants. Speaking of material structures and strictures of marginality, bell hooks reflects,

Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We look both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe. Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

an ongoing private acknowledgement that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole. This sense of wholeness...provided us an oppositional world view.<sup>448</sup>

The architectural and material history of the churches examined in this dissertation reveals a myriad of philosophical and material negotiations that requires a consideration of the center and margins, oppressor and oppressed as well as mainstream American religious practice and the expressions of the “black sacred cosmos.”<sup>449</sup> In the case of these two churches, architectural and aesthetic style was central to cultural advancement. Generations of African Americans acquired a religious and cultural knowledge, rooted in learning to see. It is in the act of looking that an oppositional perspective is constructed for survival.

The lasting challenge of feminist analysis is to uncover and extend the documentation of how women shaped African American sacred aesthetics. Following this feminist interpretation of place, this study reinforces the need for investigating alternative sites where African American art was commissioned, created, installed and exhibited. The AME denomination offers few examples of answering the question posed concerning what role women had in shaping AME religious space. Women are being invited to paint and we moved beyond figuration. But of note is the case of Baltimore Bethel AME Church’s current which rests behind their altar and choir loft. This mural was completed by an African American female painter, Yvonne Owens-Everett who was a graduate student in the art department at Howard University.<sup>450</sup> This mural reflected the influence of Black Liberation Theology and Pan Africanism on more traditional AME churches.

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<sup>448</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press), vii.

<sup>449</sup> Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University, 1990) 2. The authors define the black sacred cosmos as “the religious worldview of the African American [that] is related both to their African heritage, which envisages the whole universe as sacred, and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath.”

<sup>450</sup> Lynn Igoe and James Igoe, *250 Years of Afro-American Art: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Bowker, 1981), 996; James P. Wind and James Welborn Lewis, *American Congregations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994), 267; A.B. Spellman, “From the Soul of Africa: the Pan-Africanist Movement in Black Art,” *Washington Post*, 20 Aug 1978. There is very little documentation on Yvonne

### **Iconographies Reconsidered: New Horizons for African American Visual Culture**

This dissertation initially emerged out of methodological difficulties of studying the subject of lived religion practiced by African American master artists like Benny Andrews and Romare Bearden. Excavating or searching for evidence of religious expression in archival collections can be challenging if an artist does not explicitly discuss religion or spirituality. Instead, examining communal efforts to commission art and develop an aesthetic cultural tradition has proven more fruitful. In fact, this path of inquiry exploring institutional archives also reveals the role architecture played in creating space to sustain artistic practice. This approach also allows analysis of the economic agency African American communities exerted from the eighteenth century to the contemporary moment. This section of the conclusion will present a select group of art historical sources from black church archival collections and African American publications. These examples offer important critical cues and questions that support a more expansive understanding of African American aesthetics.

The research conducted over the last three years proves that spaces secured and shaped by African Americans, such as churches, contain multigenerational art legacies. These sites disclose how African Americans negotiated American visual practice and in some cases forged new forms of representation. With these art actions described in this study, both congregations become coordinates in a larger landscape of African American spatial and aesthetic intervention. Metropolitan AME Church commissioned and promoted a cultural aesthetic and sensibility that evolved but remained rooted in self-determination. The art objects and artifacts examined here only represent a small segment of the church's collection. Aspects of the collection which could

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Owens Everett who was active during the 1970s through the 1990s in the Baltimore, Maryland, Washington, DC area. She did attend Howard University and 2016 interviews with Howard University professor, painter James Phillips, confirmed her attendance at Howard University during his time as artist-in-residence.

not be examined in this study reveal the influence women in the congregation maintain in adorning the cathedral of African Methodism. For example, during the 1920s, two women donated the communion table and baptismal font that remain in Metropolitan's chancel today.

The visual tradition of the network of Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is a multifaceted story of pioneering artists that demand reclamation. For instance, the stories behind the Black Madonna murals in Shrine of the Black Madonna affiliated churches in Atlanta and Houston have yet to be thoroughly documented.<sup>451</sup> The mother church, Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 promoted artists that solidified ties between the Shrine church and Black Art Movements. Although Glanton Dowdell's affiliation with the Shrine of the Black Madonna was short-lived, Carl Owens, Aaron "IBN" Pitts and Jon Onye Lockard thrived from this association.<sup>452</sup>

Artist and professor, Jon Onye Lockard was an important proponent of Black Arts Movement ideologies and Black Christian Nationalist Aesthetics during the 1970s. Jon Onye Lockard was a Black Arts Movement artist who was considered as a potential artist for the chancel mural commission. In 1966, he submitted his pastel drawing *Black Messiah* to the Heritage Committee as a proposed design for the chancel mural. (Figure 5.2) His *Black Messiah*

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<sup>451</sup> Carl Owens (1929-2002) was a Detroit born illustrator and painter. He was educated at Wayne State University and the Society of Arts and Crafts. He gained national acclaim as a selected artist to contribute to Anheuser Busch's illustrated series *The Great Kings of Africa*. After an exhibition in the Shrine galleries in Detroit, Owens executed an acrylic on wood mural in Atlanta retrofitted movie theater sanctuary. Houston's Shrine of the Black Madonna featured a four panel mural program that features a portrait of church founder, the Rev. Albert Cleage.

<sup>452</sup> Aaron "IBN" Pitts, "Manifesto of Revolutionary Black Art" Black Power Movement Collection, Part 4: The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, Series 5: 409, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection. Aaron "IBN" Pitts (1941- ) is an artist activist who was instrumental in sustaining the aesthetics and vision of the Black Arts Movement. In the 1970s, Black Graphics International published his pamphlet entitled, "Manifesto of Revolutionary Black Art." Here, the artist asserts, "The lines of what is art and who is it for is all in the same bag and you can't say that art isn't political cause it sure as hell destroys that which it's supposed to enlighten/ if I can't paint to sell to the people who need it then I shouldn't even be doing it. For it must be sold at what the people can afford of it's to be judged correctly at all." This passage speaks to an art practice that is grounded in the process of making art for a targeted African American audience akin to the object outlined by AfriCobra Artist Collective. Pitts' creative process comes to include videography as well as collage.

is a quarter length portrait of a black Christ, crying. Although this image was preferred by Cleage, Edward Vaughn criticized the depiction for having blue eyes.<sup>453</sup> In March 1968, Lockard's *Black Messiah* was included among a sampling of artworks in his article "Black Art."<sup>454</sup> The black and white reproduction of *Black Messiah* enhances the brown skin of the Christ and obscures the light eyes against which Vaughn protested. In black and white photographs, *The Black Madonna and Child* and *The Black Messiah* demonstrate a visual interest in light, value and form. This advances the argument for the aesthetic shift promoted by art commissioned or affiliated with the Shrine of the Black Madonna. This drawing was framed and placed in the church foyer during the 1970s. Throughout the 1970s, Lockard publicly promoted Black Arts definition in outlets such as the *Philadelphia Tribune* and *Chicago Daily Defender*.<sup>455</sup>

In 1978, Lockard's lectures and writings were published in the short-lived publication *Fromusicology Journal*. While several articles bear the influence of AfriCobra's 1970 manifesto, "Ten in Search of a Nation," Lockard's "Afrikan Mul-zic" lecture outlines how African idioms across music, dance and art can offer complementary or alternate inspiration and aesthetic direction for black artists.<sup>456</sup> In his closing entry entitled "An Ideology for Black Art," Lockard states, "When we solidify our images, myths, legends and structures, we are historicizing them and ourselves. We are writing our own history... The Black artist must have the courage to incorporate into the expression of Afro-American new art forms, new spaces and volumes, new

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<sup>453</sup> Paul Lee, "Interview with Edward Vaught, 2013," < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7WXF8IFUyg> > (Accessed: December 23, 2015).

<sup>454</sup> Jon Onye Lockard, "Black Art," *Negro Digest* (Mar 1968): 94, as republished on Googlebooks, (Accessed: June 12, 2016).

<sup>455</sup> "Black Artists Have Obligation to Race, Says Famed Painter," *Philadelphia Tribune* (13 Feb 1971): 21; "Says Black Artists Should Be Clarion of Black Life," *Atlanta Daily World* (11 Feb 1971):1; "Jon Lockard Discusses Role of Black Artists," *Chicago Daily Defender* (22 Feb 1971): 11; "Perspectives: The Cover Artist," *Black World* (Sep 1972): 49, as republished on Googlebooks (Accessed: June 12, 2016). Lockard's portrait of poet, Gwendolyn Brooks was used as a cover image.

<sup>456</sup> Jeff Donaldson, "Ten in Search of a Nation," *Black World* (Oct 1970): 80, as republished on Googlebooks (Accessed: June 18, 2016).



cultural values, all of which evolve through critical selection.”<sup>457</sup> Lockard’s reflection correlates to the criticality and the call for new form and new art that express a new politicized perspectives on Black identity Cleage promoted as founder of the Shrine of the Black Madonna churches.

In 1987, Lockard’s *Black Messiah* was included in William Mosley’s book *What Color Was Jesus?* as illustrative proof to the text.<sup>458</sup> This religious community established an early space and iconography that revolutionized and perhaps assisted in the normalization of Black Christian iconography in African American visual culture. Although Lockard was not a member of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1, the artist collaborated with other Black Arts Movement artists through the 1990s to sustain Black Christian Iconography.<sup>459</sup> One of the greatest contributions of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, #1 is the legacy of cultivating artist and black art ideologies that enabled the development of new artists’ networks united by Black Christian Iconography.

The findings of this dissertation concerning iconography were confirmed by examining the social function of the imagery prevalent in African American churches. In the case of Metropolitan AME Church, the denomination published texts such as the *Encyclopedia of African Methodism* that combined text portraits and photographs to visually document the cultural advancement of the religious community. By the late 1970s, the denomination circulated a children’s coloring book entitled *AME Coloring Book: Color and Know*. Children were required

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<sup>457</sup> John Onye Lockard, “An Ideology for Black Artists,” *Afromusicology Journal* 1 (1978): 57. This essay was originally published in *First World Journal of Black Thought* 2 (Spring 1978).

<sup>458</sup> William Mosley, “The Messiah Was Black,” *What Color Was Jesus?* (Chicago: African American Images, 1987) 5.

<sup>459</sup> In the mid-1990s, Lockard contributed several compositions to Nelson Steven’s *Art in the Service of the Lord* calendar series. The 1996 edition brought together AfriCobra artists and artists affiliated with the Shrine including Jon Onye Lockard and Carol Owens. Nelson Steven’s *Mary and the Baby Jesus* advances black Madonna and child iconography according to AfriCobra aesthetics.

to complete lines and color in the portraits of denominational founders as well as institutional sites such as the AME denomination's Douglas Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>460</sup>

The correlation between religious art in select churches and Black Liberation Theology texts also influences this pattern. For example, the cover of *What Color Was Jesus?* featured an illustration by Cornell Barnes which brought together twelve historic black leaders including Sojourner Truth, Jesse Jackson, W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey among others, before what appears to be a shepherd like rendering of Christ with outstretched arms.<sup>461</sup> Perhaps evidencing the impact of this black hero and heroine imagery, by 1994, Washington, DC's Union Temple Baptist Church became home to the *Last Supper* mural by Myron Jenkins. (Figure 6.1) In this mural, Jenkins places a black Christ looming above a table with twelve black leaders such as Marcus Garvey and Elijah Mohammed. As the examination of secondary sources such as *Ebony* magazine uncovers, publications on black religious expression often incorporate art that circulates heavily throughout the African American community.

*Jet* magazine briefly documents Myron Jenkins's career in religious art, announcing the artist secured a stained-glass window for the new suburban AME mega church, Ebenezer AME Church.<sup>462</sup> (Figure 6.2) In the stained glass window, Jenkins demonstrates an awareness of James Evans Jr.'s painting *Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian* (1986) in content and

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<sup>460</sup> Harvey Boyd, Cover of *AME Coloring Book: Color and Know*, 1974, from the private collection of Dr. Elka Stevens, Baltimore, Maryland. This text is also available at the Library of Congress. Influenced by the Black Arts Movement's promotion of celebrating under-recognized African American leaders, this is the cover illustration for the AME coloring book introduces young members to popular AME visual motifs such as portraiture and architectural facades.

<sup>461</sup> Cornell Barnes, frontispiece for William Mosley *What Color Was Jesus?* (1987), illustration by book from the collection of the author. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, African American ministers and scholars advanced the legacy of contesting dominant oppression through the affirmation of Christ's racialized identity. In this instance, Barnes moves beyond the phenotypical representation of Christ as being of African descent. I was unable to find any biographical information on Cornell Barnes, beyond a commercial illustration of a black hero *Last Supper* inspired image.

<sup>462</sup> "Black Art: Artist Bring Blackness to the Walls of Churches," *Jet Magazine*, 7 Mar 1994: 46, as republished by Googlebooks (Accessed: January 5, 2017).

design.<sup>463</sup> (Figure 6.3) The art of Evans and Jenkins affirms the impact of Black Arts Movement imagery of the black family and its adaptation to Christian visual culture.<sup>464</sup> There is direct correlation between the type of imagery that appears in these publications and African American religious spaces.

The exploration of African American Protestant churches has evidenced an equally compelling body of images that documents the consistent active presence of African Americans in some mainstream White Protestant churches. The May 1955 *Jet* magazine published a photograph that illustrates the potential of investigating African American art in mainstream Protestant religious space. Figure 6.4 shows an African American male painter and factory worker, George White, working on a landscape painting in a choir room that serves as the artist's make-shift studio. The artist paints in the foreground as the church's pastor and a local art critic observe. A reproduction of Warner Sallman's *Head of Christ* is partially visible over the head of the art critic. This photograph is important as it poses new insights. For instance, it is imperative to recover alternate studio and exhibition spaces that sustained African American artistic production. Secondly, it may be fruitful to consider how white churches were represented in African American press outlets, in order to understand the intervention of African American religious spaces.

The two congregations examined in this study represent a narrow segment of a larger cosmos of black religion. The subject of African American church architecture and aesthetics deserves a national survey to assess the range, diversity and discernible patterns. This study affirms that discussing the history and style of African American churches necessitates a

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<sup>463</sup> Kymberly N. Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016) 70.

<sup>464</sup> Rebecca Zorach, "'Dig the Diversity in Unity': AfriCOBRA's Black Family," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 28 (2011): 102-111.

consideration of context, with regards to architectural style, methods of intervention and socio-economic factors. As a cultural repository, the African American churches demand material documentation and interpretation. This thick interpretation of the black church, in all its varieties, is necessary to understand how the institution is referred to metaphorically in African American writing and popular culture.

The introductory chapter of this dissertation discussed W.E.B. Du Bois' incorporation of the metaphorical and symbolic content of the black church in *The Souls of Black Folk*. This pattern of referencing the black church as metaphor appears later in Black Arts Movement literature as well. This is evidenced in the AfriCobra 1970 manifesto, "Ten in Search of a Nation," published in *Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*) and written by Black Arts Movement pioneer, Jeff Donaldson. In defining the first stylistic quality of the AfriCobra aesthetic, "expressive awesomeness," artist and art historian, Donaldson, states, "The expressive awesomeness that one experiences in African Art and life in the U.S.A. like the Holiness church (which is about as close to home as we are in this country) and the demon that is the blues..."<sup>465</sup> Interestingly, Donaldson seems to conflate the largely African American Pentecostal Movement with the Holiness Movement which was comprised of African American and white members.<sup>466</sup> Known for large interdenominational religious camp meetings, the Holiness Movement emerged during the late nineteenth century as a result of the Second Great Awakening. Donaldson's reference to the Holiness as the closest space "to home" was more than likely a reference to

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<sup>465</sup> Jeff Donaldson, "AfriCobra I: Ten in Search of a Nation," *Black World* (Oct 1970):85, as republished by Googlebooks (Accessed: January 8, 2017).

<sup>466</sup> Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, "The Black Pentecostals: The Spiritual Legacy with a Black Beginning," *The Black Church and the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) 77-79. Lincoln and Mamiya observe, "A confusion as to the distinction between Holiness and Pentecostal groups persists to the present time and is exacerbated by the fact that in actual practice the lines distinguishing the two groups have been substantially blurred. ...these groups embrace both the requirements of conversion and of holiness or sanctification as prerequisite for salvation as well as the 'third work of grace' called the 'baptism in the Holy Ghost,' which is manifested in glossolalia or 'speaking in tongues.'"

Pentecostalism, which was recognized as a historically African American religious tradition in African American communities.<sup>467</sup> With this terminological slippage aside, Donaldson confirms this branch of the African American Protestant church as a reservoir of cultural legacy that connects generations. Here, one of the chief philosophical architects of the Black Arts Movement cites a form of African American Pentecostalism as an example of a site of African retentions that in his contemporary moment could be recalled and employed for resistance and survival.

Although, it may seem like a superficial reference, when one considers the aesthetics of African American Pentecostal religious spaces, which include text-based banners as well as illuminated symbols and signage, it is possible that African American Pentecostal visual strategies directly influenced the functional protest art of AfriCobra and the Black Arts Movement. African American religious material and visual culture demands an evaluation of sites outside of traditional art institutions in order to assess the aesthetic facets of not only lived religion but the aesthetics of the everyday. The legacies of these practices complicate a canonical, linear progression of African American art that reveals a more accurate glimpse of the spaces, objects and images that adorned African American lives.

By investigating the multifaceted histories in two African American Protestant churches, glimpses of the struggle, beauty and instances of freedom in black life in America are revealed. The aesthetic and material role in documenting this space captures narratives lost in textual sources. It is the process of designing, painting, photographing and looking at African American

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<sup>467</sup> Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C.H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ*, Centennial ed. (Bakersfield: Pneuma Life Publisher, 1996) 31. The first and largest Pentecostal denomination is Church of God in Christ, founded by a southern African American minister, Charles H. Mason in 1907 but traces its roots to the 1890s. Church of God in Christ historian Ithiel Clemmons says this of this founding Pentecostal denomination: "Pentecostalism is the only denomination of the Christian faith in the United States founded by African-American people...Mason was firmly committed to preserving the African spirit cosmology. The ring shout was the flash point of the European-African conflict...Thus, the holy dance, like its predecessor the ring shout, reflected the determination of the children of slaves to preserve both their spiritual autonomy and what they perceived to be elements of ancestral genius."

religious spaces that expose histories of survival and self-determination. This point is so eloquently conveyed through the words of African American woman painter Varnette Honeywood.<sup>468</sup> While recalling her thoughts on her 1974 painting *Gossip in the Sanctuary* to artist-art historian Samella Lewis, Honeywood confesses,

The expressions of self-esteem, power and self-determination were instilled in many of our leaders through the Church. Many experience their first feelings of dignity and worth which fostered desire to keep the “faith torch” lighted as they led the way to the outside world so full of prevailing forces. In church, they felt free to dream, to hope and to show all the human instincts...even to gossip.<sup>469</sup>

The artist astutely attests to the church as an influential socio-economic, political sphere where cultural legacies are sustained. This dissertation examines the lived material and visual life of the African American church in an effort to expand and complicate standing notions of African American cultural production.

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<sup>468</sup> Samella S. Lewis, *African American Art and Artists*, third ed., rev. and expanded, (Berkeley: University of California Press) 157. Varnette P. Honeywood (1950-2010) was a Los Angeles based African American painter who was known for her genre images of African American life. She attended Spelman College and the University of Southern California, where she earned a graduate degree in art education. Her art gained national visibility by being included on the sets of African American situational comedy television shows, most notably, *The Cosby Show* (1984-1991) and *Amen* (1986-1991).

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid*, 157.



Figure 6.1. Unidentified photographer, *Myron Jenkins before Union Temple Baptist Church (Washington, D.C.) mural* as reproduced in “Black Art: Artist Bring Blackness to the Walls of Churches,” *Jet Magazine*, 7 Mar 1994: 46

The revisionist spirit of the Black Arts Movement and the Black Christian Nationalism advance the tradition of African American church murals. This photograph of Myron Jenkin before his mural *Last Supper* at Union Temple Baptist Church records this influence. Echoing Barnes’ frontispiece, the reinterpretation of *Last Supper* iconography represents the potential for finding new iconographic patterns in African American visual culture.



Figure 6.2. Myron Jenkins, *sanctuary stained glass window* from Ebenezer AME Church, Fort Washington, MD.

In the mid-1990s, Myron Jenkins was commissioned to complete a stained glass window for a new edifice for Ebenezer AME Church (Fort Washington, Maryland). Church co-pastors, the Revs. Grainger Browning and Joann Browning have remarked that the artist based the window design on the pastors and their two children. This imagery reflect the influence of early Black Arts Movement art that celebrated the nuclear Black family unit as a response to Daniel Moynihan's 1965 published report *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action*.





Figure 6.3. Joseph Evans, Jr., *Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian*, 1986, Trinity United Methodist Church, Chicago, from Kymberly Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016) 70, photograph by Kymberly Pinder.

Considering the high visibility of Black Liberation Theology of Jeremiah Wright's Trinity Unity Methodist Church in Chicago, Trinity's 1986 painting offered an artistic precedent for Ebenezer AME Church's stained glass window design.

ART



**Artist With Church Studio:** Using the choir robe room of Central Presbyterian Church in Haverstraw, N. Y., as a studio, pipe factory worker George White puts the final touches to a canvas for his instructor, art critic Frederic Taubes (c.), and Rev. Harold J. Quigley. Says White of his work: "I just took a lot of paint and pushed it around until it looked good."

Figure 6.4. "Artist with Church Studio," *Jet Magazine* (19 May 1955).

*Jet Magazine* and other Johnson Publishing outlets document the art production of African Americans during the second half of the twentieth century. It remains an under-explored source for recovering the experiences of artists at the margins of African American art history.

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