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# In the world but not of the world: A church's relation to its environment

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IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD:  
A Church's Relation to Its Environment

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Department of Sociology  
and the  
Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
James Earl Floyd

August, 1975

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Accepted for the faculty of the College of Graduate Studies of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Arts.

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First, I must thank Charles and Ann Floyd. They, as much as anyone, have witnessed, lived, and therefore know the meaning of struggle. They are my history, the authors of my being.

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Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to the worshippers

at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and the inhabitants  
of the city's street corners. They are the true authors  
of this work.

--James Floyd  
Boston, Massachusetts  
April 13, 1975

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INTRODUCTION:  
THE INDUCTIVE PURSUIT OF A RESEARCH PROBLEM

Discovery-Oriented Research

Research in general and inductive research in particular often begins from an unfocused curiosity. From this perplexity, emerges the problem of research, the collecting of relevant data, and the drawing of theoretical inferences from said data. The current research enterprise includes these major problems but is, in many respects, different. That is to say, the execution is different from that which is found in "traditional patterns of investigation."

In discovery-oriented research, the weight and relationship between the components of the research act differ from those of verification research. The latter is more a step-by-step process while the former is a process in which there is more interaction between the research components, e.g., "definition of the research problem" is a more prolonged and complex part of the research process; a considerable amount of data collection and analysis is done before a fully statable research problem is developed. In short, while the customary first step in verification studies is defining a research problem, discovery-oriented studies are more a product of interaction with other components of the research enterprise - more a product of "field

work" than of work with existing literature previous to field work.

With respect to the present problem, perhaps it is best that we examine the situational factors which lead to the conceptualization of the researchers unfocused curiosity, and its progression into a statable research problem.

#### History of the Research Problem

The initial idea of doing research in the Black Church came about as a result of my participation in activities which at the time seemed far removed from the religious domain. I had just finished a semester at attempting to formulate a research project on barroom behavior. Quite by accident, I began listening to religious programming aired over a local radio station. Of serious interest was the amount of collective participation that occurred within the worship service.

Unconsciously, I began to contrast both the amount of collective participation and emotional catharsis expressed in the Black Church with that expressed in barrooms. The existence of similar types of behavior, in contrasting settings, introduced the theoretical possibility of social arrangements being shaped by conditions found in

the environment from which they emerge. However, my intent was not to carry out a comparative study of collective participation and emotional catharsis in contrasting sacred and secular settings. Instead, the situational factors stemming from the barroom setting merely functioned to give birth to the idea of . . . research in the Black Church. In sum, my finding in regards to collective participation and emotional catharsis in a secular setting led me to the doors of the Black Church.

At this point in time, there was no preconceived notion of what my interests were. The inability to focus on a well-defined problem presented itself as the first major obstacle. However, the problem of "what am I looking for" became functional in that it dictated my research approach. Stated differently, the setting for the investigation was the Black Church, but the Black Church was a bit broad for purposes of exploratory research. The questions thus became, what particular aspect of the Black Church am I interested in? Not being able to answer this question, it was concluded that the research problem would be generated from observations made within the setting.

Traditionally, one of the first steps in the formulation of a research focus is to review available literature. In this particular instance, a review of literature having reference to the urban Black Church was

found to be limited in both scope and quantity. Additionally, the aim was to select the research problem more from the context of observations rather than from existing literature.

Reading was intensified during periods of withdrawal from the field. For it was during these periods that a review of the literature contributed additional insights to the problem at hand. In short, a review of the literature came at a point in time when it could not be used for the purposes of either guiding field observations or becoming a dominant force in the development of a research problem. The sociological literature served in the refining and clarification of the research focus more than in its formulation.<sup>1</sup>

During the first week in September, 1973, field work was initiated with the specific intent of carrying out

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<sup>1</sup>The most insightful works at this time were the following: Horace R. Cayton, and St. Clair Drake, Black Metropolis; a study of Negro life in a northern city (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945); and Edward Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). Both works impressed upon me the importance of the church in the black community.

holistic observations in a variety of Black Churches. Observations were recorded in church settings differentiated in terms of size, denomination, and social class. The objective was to develop as complete a record as possible on the diversified range of activities and events found within these churches.<sup>2</sup> The eventual goal was, by virtue of an examination of these recorded events and activities, to develop a focused interest.

Well into the third month of my investigation certain characteristics of the Black Church became more prominent in my thinking. The most fascinating characteristic at this point was that of "ecstasy." The excitement stirred by ecstasy, as well as its spontaneity, heightened my curiosity. When both the excitement and spontaneity of such behavior were coupled with the many discussions between myself and Professor Simpson, ecstasy was selected as the research focus. A high degree of interest was stimulated in that the presence (or absence) of emotional display seemed related to factors found within the church setting. The factors of music, intensity of audience

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<sup>2</sup>The specific kinds of activities and events included Sunday Worship service, pre-service behavior, post-service behavior, musical programs, Sunday School, prayer meetings, baptism, church visiting and hosting, anniversary programs, and revivals.

participation, and the assorted patterns of "call and response."<sup>3</sup>

St. Paul Baptist Church was selected as a representative case from a number of other churches in which the display of ecstasy was observed. St. Paul was seen as an example of a certain class of churches which were pre-disposed toward emotional display.<sup>4</sup> The pre-disposition rests upon the following social entities: a worship service featuring a rhythmic style of music and ample opportunities for collective participation, and the lower socioeconomic status of congregation members.

Finally, St. Paul was selected with respect to the variable of size. The population was small enough so that, what was being said and done in worship services could be recorded in detail. Since data would be collected primarily on Sundays, a single case study, rather than a comparative study, was decided upon. Given the number of Sundays in a

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<sup>3</sup>"Call and response" occurs when one actor emits a phrase and one or more of the actors respond to the call with a verbal response of their own. The most typical response is that of "Amen."

<sup>4</sup>V.E. Daniels hypothesized (in 1942) that religious ritual performs different functions for different classes within an urban "Negro" population (p. 352). He suggested that there was a relation between social class and general church behavior (p. 361). See, Vattel Elbert Daniels, "Ritual and Stratification in Chicago Negro Churches" in American Sociological Review, Vol. 7 (June 1942), pp. 352-361.



month and the number of months in a years time period, it was concluded that not enough detailed observations could be collected and analyzed in two comparative settings and still produce a quality product.

Once a record of observations had been compiled with regards to the sequence of worship events at St. Paul, a period of time was spent on an intensive analysis of the record. During this period of withdrawal from the field, an explicit research focus and a conceptual frame of reference developed in conjunction with one another. Emerging out of the frame of reference were conceptual categories which gave focus and direction to subsequent research.

This period of analysis resulted in ecstasy being modified as an area of substantive interest due to methodological questions that had to do with the issues of ethics and data collection. Ethically, the difficulty was in my personal unwillingness to move from an examination of the public display of ecstasy - to - what was felt to be excessive intrusion into the private spheres of individual behavior.<sup>5</sup> As for the issue of data collection, the number

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<sup>5</sup>Ecstasy is considered to be deeply religious behavior by some. The researcher felt uncomfortable in asking questions which put these persons in a defensive position. As it turned out, data was collected not by direct questions

of activities occurring simultaneously with ecstasy made attempts at sorting out their relationship to one another a complicated undertaking.

While moving away from ecstasy, the focus of observations moved toward the church as a . . . "closed system." The natural drift to a closed systems approach also had some link to existing substantive literature. For example, in The Negro Church, Frazier noted that the church was one of the few, or only, institutions that blacks in the United States were able to develop on their own, it was pictured as historically free of white domination.<sup>6</sup> This raised the question of, to what degree the Black Church is a "closed system" or is autonomous in relation to its environment.

In addition to the substantive literature, the "voluntaristic action schema" of Parsons and Shils was found to provide useful theoretical assistance in the shifting from ecstasy to a closed systems approach.<sup>7</sup>

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(Cont.) but it was volunteered during the course of normal conversations.

<sup>6</sup>See, Edward Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

<sup>7</sup>Talcott Parsons, and Edward A. Shils, Toward a General Theory of Action (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

The action schema furnishes somewhat of a detailed description of the elements which comprise a system. The thrust of Parsons and Shils work stresses the importance of social systems as a definer of action for individual actors.

Regarding this matter they state that:

There is (in a social system) interdependent and, in part, concerted action in which the concert is a function of collective goal orientation or common values, and of a consensus of normative and cognitive expectations.<sup>8</sup>

Of more importance to the closed systems approach, however, is their notion of boundary maintenance. Boundaries, according to Parsons and Shils, are maintained not by outside forces but are self-maintained by structural elements as they operate within the system itself.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the insights gained from the action schema, it was found to be shallow in one very important respect. It fails to touch upon the defining characteristics of what had been labeled as a closed system.<sup>10</sup> Thus, by examining

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>10</sup>We believe that Parsons and Shils addressed the issue of a closed system indirectly and superficially. They called a system which is capable of maintaining itself through internal mechanisms a "society." Any other was called a "sub-system" of society and must interact with total society. See, Parsons and Shils, p. 196.

the relationship between the church as a system and its environment, we propose that the notion of closure can be clarified. A closed system refers to the extent to which St. Paul is isolated from its environment. Hence, the church is deemed as completely secluded from its environment when and if all of its goals can be achieved through reliance by its participants entirely upon resources found within the system itself. The ability to achieve goals in such a manner results in a system which is independent from its environment. However, one becomes cognizant of the fact that few systems, if any, are completely closed. Since the closed systems approach developed out of an analysis of observational records, the action schema was of little help in shedding light on the problem of the extent of closure.

An article by Alvin Gouldner, "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory" contributes a definite perspective in regards to the extent of closure.<sup>11</sup> Gouldner maintains that the parts of a system vary with respect to the extent of their autonomy from both the social system

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<sup>11</sup>Alvin W. Gouldner, "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory," in Symposium in Sociological Theory, ed. by Llewellyn Gross (Evanston, Illinois: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 241-271.

and its environment.<sup>12</sup> That is, a system is not completely closed but varies in its connectedness to the environment. Our observations on the relation of the church to its environment have demonstrated further the need to treat environment as a variable also; in this study we differentiated the environment of St. Paul into three sectors - other religious bodies, the Black community, and metropolitan Omaha. So, the extent of connectedness between the church and its environment varies in accordance with the environmental sector being considered.

The extent of closure, manifested in the relation of the church to its environment, is determined by examining key structural activities of the church. Prayer, rituals, testimonies, church literature, sick calls, and the use of facilities will be examined. These activities will be assessed particularly within the context of public worship services and with special emphasis being given to their goals and the extent to which the means of realizing said goals are autonomous from the church's environment.

Taking the structural activity of prayer as an example, observations indicate that the act has at least two primary goals. On one hand, the goal is to make one's

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

day-to-day existence more tolerable. Conversely, prayer is a medium by which one moves from a world of trouble - to - a harmonious afterlife. The goals of prayer are realizable by means that are built into the organizational structure of the church, i.e., "alter call," "devotion," and "prayer meetings." The difficulty is in determining the degree of connectedness between the means of achieving the goals of prayer and the church's environmental sectors.

We have described the process whereby the point was reached at which we could explicitly state the research problem of this study. Our objective is to undertake a collection and analysis of data pertaining to the structural elements and processes that either connect a single church to its environment or established boundaries between it and its environment. In this effort we intend to depict how a church is related to its social environment and the extent to which it is autonomous as an organization. As these initial pages indicate, the definition of a research problem in discovery-oriented research does not precede the other components of the research enterprise so much as it emerges in interaction with them.

## CHAPTER I

### LEVELS OF RESEARCH AWARENESS

#### Introduction

Participant observation was chosen as the research method, in this study, for two very important reasons. One has to do with intrinsic values and the other with the character of the phenomena being investigated. In terms of personal values, the method of participant observation is the most comfortable research approach for this investigator. Comfort stems from the possibilities this method provides for the researcher to get close enough to the source of data so that its qualitative aspects may be transmitted from subject to researcher. In short, participating in the daily, sometimes routine, aspects of the group being observed leaves only oneself standing between the data and the accuracy of interpretation.

Participant observation, when combined with the use of an inductive approach, increases the researcher's chances of capturing social action as it is participated in and felt by participants in a given setting. The art of reconstructing reality, not as you see it but as others see it, is an uncomfortable undertaking. The uneasiness

originates from repeated efforts at sorting out, shifting, and separating one's personal interpretations from those of participants in the setting. Participant observation does not completely solve this problem but it has a capacity for keeping it in front of the researcher.

The Black Church is a very different kind of religious phenomena.<sup>o)</sup> The setting chosen for my study was one in which participation in worship events was stressed. Observation, or non-involvement, was not looked upon as a desirable activity. Persons in the setting more or less demanded my participation. Therefore, the character of the religious phenomena was coupled with my research values in dictating the selection of participant observation as the method of inquiry.

I, in turn, felt it a necessity to withdraw from participating long enough to observe just what it was I was participating in. Participating and observing are not easily separable, however. When participating in an event, the researcher is, in many instances, observing what is being said, what is being done, the feeling being conveyed, and his relation to others. On the other side of the coin, while the researcher is observing, he is still very much a part of the setting and his presence makes him a participant.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the levels of research awareness. This



researcher believes that: there is no way to feel what participants in a setting feel and then communicate it to a reading audience with exactness. As an outsider collecting data, the researcher himself can only reach a certain level of awareness. To describe the levels of awareness, as they were encountered in our research, the concepts of exoteric, mesoteric, and esoteric will be utilized.<sup>1</sup> These concepts will hopefully show the reader that, the researcher gains a better understanding of human behavior as he moves from level to level. Before launching into a discussion of the levels of awareness, it is necessary to understand the step which precedes even a superficial understanding of the setting under study. This step is of course - the initiating of the research enterprise.

### Initiating the Research Enterprise

Doing research in organizational settings, which are small enough in size and have as a goal the selling of a product to all non-members, presents the researcher with

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<sup>1</sup>The researcher adapted these concepts from Peter Uspenskii. They are not a direct adaptation, however, since only the notion of levels of understanding and the concepts were borrowed. No attempt was made to use the concepts in the exact manner as the original author. For a discussion of how they were used in their original context see, Peter Demianovich Uspenskii, In Search of the Maraculous (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1950).

special problems. Size is an important variable since small churches as disrupted by the sudden and repeated presence of a visitor (researcher). Since religion is the product being sold, even social researchers have a "soul" and therefore need to be evangelized. Thus, upon entry into the church building, all visitors are immediately recognized, welcomed with a hearty handshake and a smile, given an envelope for offering, and subjected to subtle front door evangelism by deacons, church members, and others who believe in "mission."

I found it necessary, before entering into serious research, to first establish a working agreement between myself and the outer guard of the organization. The minister is the head of the church, and as its' guardian is in command of all who are members. So, the initial steps in the research process was aimed at establishing friendly relationships with subjects as well as gathering data.

Establishing relationships was important in that data could be gathered more easily once the researcher knew who had the answer. To avoid contesting the authority of the minister, my first step was to seek him out and inform him of my research intentions. In order to remain independent of ministerial control, I identified myself as a social researcher, thereby elevating our relationship to a professional level. To insure him that my presence would

not be too obtrusive and disrupt his organization, the research role was further clarified as, "researcher-worshiper."

The minister, at the point of initial contact, agreed to give me free rein in carrying out the research. Although demonstrating a bit of delight at being made somewhat of a consultant in the research enterprise, he either did not buy my role definition or could not completely separate himself from his ministerial role. While agreeing to my research proposal, there came a steady stream of questions aimed at finding out religious information, e.g., "where are you from?" "Have you been baptized?" "Are you a member of a church?" The minister simultaneously demonstrated a concern for my research and an interest in me as a potential recruit.

We suspect that anyone who enters the church for research purposes will be subjected to the same type of inquiry. Questioning is typical since everyone who attends church on a regular basis performs some service for the organization. The possibility that he might be thinking of assigning me a role of significance in the church dawned on me after a few weeks in the setting. That possibility became a reality during our second discussion as he mentioned the need for the recruitment of more "young men" into the deacon board. With this statement, he added that

they were short of Sunday school teachers and perhaps I could "lend a hand."

Teaching a Sunday school class would have interfered with my research role. It would have facilitated my movement about the setting but I would then be under the control of the minister, which carries a host of other responsibilities along with it.

I had been in the setting less than nine month<sup>32</sup> and already was wondering how long I could remain there without being assigned a role. The role of researcher-worshiper was an academic creation which I had brought to the setting. But it was of little value in contributing to the maintenance of the church. My decision was to play a waiting game and let the research role grow out of my continued participation. I had decided to accept the minister's clouded understanding of the research enterprise, to keep a bit of social distance between him and myself, and not to be dependent on him as an interpreter of my research role to his subordinates. Briefly stated, I decided to go about the business of researching and establish the role of researcher-worshiper among members of the congregation. The freedom given me by the minister put the burden on my shoulders but it also prolonged another confrontation over the rendering of services.

A Member of the Crowd: View from the Exoteric

With the apparent consent of the minister, and the disturbing thought of possibly having to render a service to the church in the back of my mind, I stepped up my dual effort at establishing relationships and gathering data. Information was to be gathered on specific events and on my relationship to others in the setting.

At the beginning of field work, I became a member of the Sunday morning crowd. The position was an exoteric one since it was extraneous to the actual worship event. My identity was concealed as I mixed with what I later recognized to be the "action seekers." Here I was able to obscure my purpose for being there from all but the marginal elements with whom I shared a mutual interest. The attraction, I suspect, stemmed from the fact that both myself and the "action seekers" were interested in what was being said and done in the setting.

The main difference, at this point, between myself and action seekers is that I was watching and listening to what they were saying and doing as well as to the others in the setting. My view of the setting was all inclusive; I had included the action seekers as part of the action whereas they had individually tabbed themselves as being removed from it. Nevertheless, our common tendency to,

"watch them" (worshippers), was enough to draw us toward one another.

After being in the setting long enough to be comfortable around church people, I decided to do as I had seen other<sup>So</sup> do - become a "visitor." For the next couple of months (eight Sundays), when the time came for the "announcement of visitors," I stood before the congregation. On five of these occasions I publically made mention of my role as researcher-worshiper.

The statement of research intentions was repeated until I felt rather foolish standing before the entire church and giving a repetitious speech which was always greeted, like those of other visitors, with an energetic round of Amens. I was wondering just how many times they would let me stand as a "visitor" before casting me in another role. Since they were reluctant to do so, I continued to stand but declined the opportunity to speak. My research intentions, from this point on, would enter into ensuing conversations but at an individual or small group level only.

Just as I was about to quit standing altogether, I was cast in a new role by the devoutly religious members of the setting.<sup>2</sup> By the practice of repeatedly standing and

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<sup>2</sup>The devoutly religious have been labeled as "a

announcing my intentions, after a while just standing and constantly making my presence known, and increasing my participation to include Sunday afternoon musical programs, I became not a visitor but a "stranger." The role change is exemplified in the following public statement by "Mother" Porter.

We thank God for the stranger in attendance.  
He comes all the time. We hope that he'll  
turn his head toward God. God my have  
somethin' to offer him.

The difference between being cast as a visitor and being defined as a stranger is that the latter has had more exposure so that a classification is possible. Despite the fact that I had taken every opportunity to define my role as a researcher-worshiper, I was not classified on the basis of it. My presence was defined in terms of the evangelistic goals of church persons.

Relationships between myself and persons in the setting were impossible to achieve since I was still extraneous to worship activities. I was doing more observing than participating. I could not, as a member of the exoteric, reach a high level of understanding until undergoing evangelization which would lead to baptism,

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(Cont.) small band of believers in Christ." They are the most avid church goers and carry the load in working for and supporting the church.

membership in the church, acceptance of the "Holy Spirit," and working for the church. I decided, since evangelism is a long-term process, to maintain the role of stranger and see what would come next.

Meanwhile, certain types of information could be gathered from the exoteric level. Within any setting there are bits of information which can be collected without participating in the activities being observed. Information from the exoteric included spotting various status groups within the church (i.e., ushers, deacons, church mothers, and musicians). It was also possible to distinguish the religious from the not so religious.

Strategy also becomes a concern at the exoteric level. The concern was how to gain entry into each status group via an informant. The decision was to again increase the rate of participation (i.e., attend prayer meetings, Sunday school, mission, and functions sponsored by various auxiliaries). Increased participation and exposure would help in sorting out who's who in small groups.

Penetration into small group situations resulted in the establishment of rapport with my first and most important informant. I had made it a practice to arrive at the church early enough to observe pre-worship service behavior. As this practice continued I discovered that deacon G had the responsibility of conducting devotion and



starting things on time. It was quite natural for me to accompany him on his rounds and chat about the church (he had been with the pastor for eighteen years, since the beginning of the church).

Our relationship grew out of his attempts to evangelize me. Many times the round of sociological questions fired at him were not responded to as he would retort with a religious statement. His deep commitment to religion, and mine to trying to analyze it, made it difficult for us to communicate at times. For example, I would ask him about the impact of music on the "shouters." He would answer by attributing shouter behavior to the "Holy Ghos'."

Interviews were very unstructured. I found that he gave me important information simply by speaking of his convictions and always trying to spread the word to me. Deacon G was clung to through the winter months as the church setting was becoming a lonely place and he was the first sign of friendship.

Acceptance by deacon G was not grounds enough for acceptance by all in the setting. I found it to be an impossible task to know the entire church family since acceptance is largely due to individual tastes and personalities. The role of researcher-worshiper is not enough to insure acceptance. The academic role is faulty for two reasons. First, in the church setting you define yourself

by putting emphasis on the fact that you are primarily a researcher and you are there to worship in addition to academic pursuits. Persons in the setting tried to turn the role around. Brother Clark, for instance, responded to my role definition by saying:

When I first came to St. Paul I thought  
 I was here just to be doin' somethin'.  
 Deep down inside I think I knew the lord  
 was tryin' to let me know somethin'.  
 Most of the people you see in a church  
 came to do a whole lot of different thangs  
 at first. God has some strange ways of  
 bringin' folks to the church . . . some  
 very strange ways. I don't care who he  
 is . . . or what his business is . . . .  
 A man's gotta save his soul before he does  
 anything else. In the lord's house every-  
 body's a child of God.

More than a few congregation members defined me primarily as a worshiper with research being incidental; if left to them the balance between participating and observing is destroyed.

The second reason the role of researcher-worshiper fails to insure acceptance is difficult to illustrate, for it is based more on the perceptions of the research. The researcher feels that, the role of researcher is situational and carries with it no personal human qualities; so you are more apt to be accepted as an individual, for human qualities are far more effective than is the title of researcher in establishing one-to-one rapport.

What we are suggesting is that it is impossible to

establish the role of participant observer. You must let it develop. The difference between establishing and developing is that the former implies that control is in the hands of the researcher; whereas, the latter attributes a bit of power to research subjects and the researcher must react to them. Role development is, in my estimation, a reciprocal process.

View from the Mesoteric: In the  
Church but not of the Church

Viewing the church from the mesoteric means that, in the role of researcher, one is able to gain a theoretical understanding of the action before him. The level of understanding differs from the exoteric view because of an increase in the amount of participation. The researcher is, however, still unable to reach full understanding since it requires complete participation and the absence of observing and the subsequent conceptualization.

The mesoteric level affords the researcher data unobtainable from the public view (exoteric). Being in the church but not of the church means intrusion into the area where there are a few unchurched. The events comprising this middle zone - prayer meetings, Sunday school, mission - were largely attended by those who were believers in Christ. The small group structure of these events demanded that I

participate more fully in worship events. Personal participation was the heaviest here because there was no crowd to hide within.

As participation increased over the weeks, worshipers began to exert pressures in order that I might declare my religious intentions. Evangelism was at its height since respondents saw a possibility of bring me into the initiated circle of worshipers. I had shown interest in the church by following the ushers, choir, and the minister to programs at other churches. My persistence in doing so lead to the development of relationships with members of the usher board, a few church mothers, and choir members. The ushers approached me with hints that I should declare my intentions. They saw me as existing in a state of confusion and not being able to make up my mind. To help me in my decision-making, they extended me an invitation to join the Usher Board.

You ought to come and join us (the church). I see you everywhere we go. I guess you haven't made up your mind yet. You ought to join the Usher Board.

Members of the choir approached me in the same fashion. The only difference is that they played upon participation as a recruiting technique. This is not surprising since many of them derived satisfaction from participating in the worship event by way of their musical

performance. The succeeding comment is representative of the approaches made by choir members.

Why don't you gon and get yō self together and make up yō mind, you ought to join the choir. If you join in you'll get more out of the service. Since you come all the time, you might as well be doin' somethin'. You always here . . . you never misses.

Worshippers were beginning to accept my presence at the more private worship events, but being there was not the same as being a fully participating member and working for the church. Everyone in the setting was then extending me an open invitation to become an active part of the church family.

Apart from worshippers who extended the opportunity for me to become a member of a club or auxiliary, were those who showed an interest in my continual attendance. They, whom I met in church or while roaming about the community, encouraged me to attend Sunday school, musical programs, and revivals. When we met in secular settings there was the continual question, "will you be in church Sunday?"

Finally there were persons who exerted pressure in ways that were not so overt. The most memorable is the church mother whom I felt to be the counterpart to deacon G. Mother Porter was aware of my research interest, and during one of our conversations employed her knowledge of it as a

recruiting tactic.<sup>3</sup>

Do you belong to any church?  
 You ought to become a member of this church. That way you will have someone who cares about you. (I) you get sick, we'll know about it and someone from the church will come and visit you. That way you'll have a home.

The offer was not enough for me to abandon my persistence at defining myself as a researcher-worshiper. Confronted with the firmness of my stance she resorted to an approach which, in my opinion, contained elements of well meant black mail.

You say you're a researcher? I remember once when I lived in Oklahoma, there was this club that I wanted to find out about. I found that I had to get inside the club to know about it. Sometimes you have to become a member to find out what they're doin' on the inside.

The offers and suggestions from members of the Usher Board, the choir, church mothers, and congregation members were not responded to with a definite yes or no. I merely re-affirmed my research role and did as I had done with the minister's offer. The issue of participation was left open for future discussion so that I could buy enough time to sell my sincerity as a researcher-worshiper.

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<sup>3</sup>Mother Porter was also a long-time member of the church. Initially, the organization had started in her home. She was a respected member of the band and a veteran evangelist.

Church members are expected to evangelize potential recruits . . . "you can't go to heaven by yourself, you gotta take somebody with you." Since I was entering a small group situation, and was obtrusive, the minister had to demonstrate his efforts of recruitment to the congregation. He fulfilled the task not by direct contact with the potential recruit but through the structural process of "open church."<sup>4</sup> I was therefore grilled by the minister during open church.

The grilling consisted of indirect references to my church participation. More disturbing than the references, were the psychological pressures which stemmed from the feeling of being verbally assaulted in front of an onlooking audience. The open church ceremony seemed directed at me on two successive Sundays. On these occasions I was clearly the only non-church member in the setting. On the third Sunday, the drama reached its zenith.

If I didn't have two legs, I'd roll down  
the aisle. You know you out of the  
church. Don't let the devil cheat you  
out of this opportunity. Don't be ashamed  
to come forward in front of these people.  
If you believe in God . . . come forward.  
Tomorrow ain't promised to ya.

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<sup>4</sup>Open church is that part of the worship service in which the minister calls for potential church members to come forward. It connects the church to the black community. See Chapter VI.

I remained seated, and refused to either comment or come forward. The congregation continued to stare in my direction and the ensuing minutes seemed like hours. I tried to turn my mind to other matters in order to escape the pressure being exerted, but I couldn't. I felt a conflict between my role as a researcher and my role as self. I felt as if I had been betrayed and used by the minister. Strong feelings arose to stand and defend myself but I showed some restraint and sweated out the anxiety-filled moments. The choice was between seriously damaging the possibility of continued research and protecting myself as a person. If I spoke out, the entire congregation would have been alienated and eight months of research would have been damaged.

The pressure was seemingly applied in situations which exhibited the most closure (i.e., mission, prayer meeting, and Sunday school) and where band members were present. The pressure was no different than that applied to others but, somehow, I thought our agreement had given me immunity to such treatment.

The open church incident, along with the long grind through the winter months, heightened my state of near exhaustion. I needed to retreat from the field. To reduce the psychological strain and to acquire some advice, I decided to solicit support from the chairman of my thesis



committee. Professor Simpson was both amused and understanding as I must have resembled a worried child.

After talking with him, I decided to re-approach Rev. Green with the intent of re-stating my professional interest in the church. Most of all I wanted to convey to him that my personal feelings and values would not allow me to join the church. I was prepared to bargain with him by offering to perform various functions around the church such as visiting the sick or teaching Sunday school.

Upon arriving at the next worship event, I was ready to do verbal battle with the minister. This time I was primed and ready. I was going to take the situation under control from the very beginning. I placed myself outside the pastor's study and rehearsed my approach. But as he entered through the outer doorway and neared the spot where I had stationed myself, he again took me by surprise. Before I could begin the attack, he very confidently stated, "yea, I want to see you to."

It turned out that the pressures of open church were for the benefit of the congregation but were also aimed at eliciting a progress report from me. In striving to avoid the minister's authority, and in my zealous attempts at developing relationships and collecting data, I had not talked to him for eight months.

The meeting was an opportunity to update him on my

progress and re-negotiate our original agreement. He assured me that I was free to carry out my research and that I was not "disturbing the church." He then inquired about the finished product and asked if it would "help the church." To this I could only offer him a copy and let him read it and see. His reply was, "good enough."

The lesson learned from the second encounter with the minister was that, despite the development of rapport with members of the congregation, research cannot be carried out without maintaining a favorable relationship with the head of an organization. For he is the guardian and the boss.

A sense of pleasure crept through my body as time came for the open church ceremony in the next worship event and the minister looked about the room, glanced briefly at me, and quickly told his congregation:

It looks like everyone here is either a member or belongs to some other church; so there's no need to extend an invitation.

### Entering the Esoteric: Takin' the final Step

The esoteric level of awareness allows the researcher to discover meaning by initiating the language and behavior of the small circle of initiated members. In the esoteric zone, meaning is ascertained more by enjoying

worship activities than undertaking an analysis of them. There is, while entering the esoteric, a corresponding decline in the amount of control one has over the research role. The researcher must put aside the role of researcher and experience the worship service first hand.

In the words of the churched, he must "open his heart and let the spirit in." "Feelin' the spirit" would bind the researcher together with the few in the setting who were believers in Christ. Persons in the setting understand this principle very well and unconsciously comment on it by saying, "those that don't understand it (their religion) won't know until you try it." Thus, to gain entrance to the esoteric, an individual must be sincere and totally dedicated to enjoying and experiencing rather than having analysis as a first priority.

Every researcher takes into the research setting a set of beliefs, values, and attitudes. I was no exception in that I had no intention of fully participating in something I didn't believe in; my interest was sociological and not religious. My goal was to collect data inductively in regards to the Black Church. Throughout the course of the investigation my personal ethics repeatedly clashed with the role that participants in the setting tried to assign me (i.e., worshiper-researcher instead of researcher-worshiper). The worshiper portion of my role, as I

conceived of it, was merely an attempt to ease the congregation's acceptance of me. If I did worship, it had more to do with the cultural beauty and expressiveness of masses of black people than the belief in a metaphysical deity. My aim was to gather data but I was not willing to go against my principles to do so.

For this reason I was not able to enter the esoteric realm of consciousness. Previously formed attitudes, beliefs, and values prohibited my "feelin' the spirit" in a religious manner. The closest I could come was the mesoteric realm and from there I was able to catch a glimpse of the esoteric. The glimpse provided small insights about esoteric meanings but was devoid of the richness and details that accompany such meanings. My reluctance to enter the small circle of initiates was noticed and probably best summarized by a worshiper who stated:

I see you here all the time. You must be tryin' to make up your mind. You've just about become one of us. Now all you got to do is take that step and come forward. Takin' that final step is sometimes the hardest part.

There was no way of explaining to her that the step in question was decided upon years before coming to St. Paul.

### A Brief Note on the Collection of Data

Of considerable concern in participant observation studies is the collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis of data. My record of observations included data collected on Sunday morning worship services, pre-service socializing, post-service socializing, baptism, church hosting and visiting, revival, and musical programs. A variety of events were included so as to sample adequately a wide range of church activities and the behavior that stemmed from them.

To gather data on the church's relation to the community sub-sector known as twenty-fourth street, relationships were established with a number of respondents who moved back and forth from church to housing projects and from church to street corners. In addition, church services were attended on several occasions in the company of these persons. Further data were collected by moving about the fringes of small street groups while they contemporaneously carried out their normal activities and listened to worship services being broadcast over church loudspeakers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The church, as part of their evangelism, broadcasted worship services and musical programs over a set of loudspeakers located on the exterior of the church. For a further discussion and description, see Chapter VI.

Coverage of the two shooting events, one involving the police and a member of the church and the other the police and a "sniper" whose family belonged to St. Paul, represented a concentrated effort at hanging about and wandering from pool hall, bars, playgrounds, street corners, or anywhere small groups gathered. The spontaneity of the shootings called for a brand of "firehouse" sociology. All data, as in other situations, were collected with the intent of recording a detailed account of the action (i.e., what was being said, what was being done, and relation to others in the setting).

Field work was done and then immediately recorded via a two to three hour session of writing. In addition to field notes, a diary was kept in order to record my personal feelings about events, persons, and situations. One of the deacons, after we gradually came to know each other, was gracious enough to make available to me, tape recordings he had made of worship services. The recordings were not sufficient within themselves, but they did help in the retrieval of verbal statements.

Once the methods of data collection and retrieval have been decided, the researcher runs head long into two problems. The first is the influence of the observer on the setting he is studying. Secondly, concern must be shown for the researcher's relations with other actors in

the setting.

There is little doubt that my presence altered the behavior of respondents; particularly in worship events closed off from the church's environment. They knew details about each others religious behavior, family situation, and personal idiosyncrasies. Since I was an outsider, it was difficult for them to carry out some of their routines without looking to see what my reaction would be. My presence was disruptive in that church members, in addition to worshipping, were studying me. Sociologists tend to think of themselves as special breed because they "observe" people. I contend that, this process is in no way a unique trait of sociologist. While the researcher is observing his subjects, he is a disturbing influence on the setting since the participants are in turn observing him.

By recording my personal feelings and prejudices, I was aware that my attitudes were closer to those possessed by the unchurched. As a supplement to the diary, I included a section in my field notes entitled, "relation to others in the setting." My feelings shaped the terminal point in my research by cutting the point of penetration off at the mesoteric level. To have gone beyond this point would have made personal values a more important issue than it was in the actual data collection.

The necessary precautions were taken in the collection of data so as to insure the recording of what the subjects themselves expressed. But collection is one thing and analysis is another. Collection is subject to a number of controls but the analysis of data is, to a large degree, the artistic efforts of the researcher. This fact, in my estimation, raises the issue of reliability. The issue is one which cannot be completely resolved through classroom intellectualizing. From an academic setting, perhaps the best that one can do is examine a piece of qualitative research to see if the data fits the concepts and if the concepts describe the data.

The best way to get at this question is for the doubters of reliability to transcend their academic world, enter a setting, and see how the social behavior plays on their senses. I have reported how it played upon mine. Experiencing things through the senses is not an exacting "science," and there is only one measure of accuracy - that of course lies in the minds of the research subjects and not in the academic notebooks of methodologists.

Ends-Means of Sub-Groups Within the Church: A Note on Naturalistic Labels

Qualitative research requires the establishment of human relations between the investigator and the subjects



of his inquiry. The extent to which such relations are developed has a profound effect on the accuracy and richness of the final product. For these components are attainable only by moving on a continuum from the public to the private spheres of informant behavior. Located at different intervals on this theoretical continuum is information which pertains to the ends and means of various sub-groups within the church.

Prior to the development of observer-informant rapport, one conceives of the church as consisting of a single homogeneous group of persons. A group of persons whose immediate goal is that of worship. However, in the movement toward the more private spheres of behavior, the researcher becomes cognizant of two important facts.

In the first place, he is made aware that groups may have many goals. The concept of "ends-means," like other sociological constructs, is subject to ambiguities. Not only can groups be guided by more than one goal but these goals are hard to operationalize and it is a task to separate goals from means. However, we are certain that church personnel at all levels construct their organizational life around the attainment of goals. We shall infer goals from a number of empirical traces (i.e., prayers, testimony, spirituals, sermons, and unstructured interviews).

The second fact brought to the awareness of the researcher has to do with group differentiation. There emerge three readily identifiable sub-groups with the basis of differentiation being the ends-means of each unit. Furthermore, each group pursues different but not necessarily conflicting ends.

Before beginning a detailed analysis of the various sub-groups found within St. Paul, perhaps it is best that we pause momentarily to discuss the labels applied to each. By doing this, the rationale for the order of appearance of the three sub-groups will gain clarity.

In keeping with our inductive approach, the labels applied to each respective sub-group (i.e., action seekers, shouters, and members of the band) emerged from naturalistic observations. The goal was to use only those terms, for describing the setting, which persons used themselves. In this way, labels emerged from within each sub-group rather than being imposed from the exterior by either the researcher instituting artificial concepts or by other sub-groups putting forth descriptive titles. It was found that sub-groups within the church often exhibited a biased view of one another. For instance, "members of the band" periodically questioned the validity of the physical displays associated with the "shouters."

You can get happy and fall out all you  
want to . . . but you can't see Jesus  
by performin'.

To accept such labeling of the shouters would not do justice to their religious experience. Only by allowing each subgroup to convey its inner workings can we approximate the re-construction of their reality.

Throughout the ensuing chapters, the reader will find that not all labels and concepts are naturalistic. Though the researcher would like to have employed the language used by persons in the setting, it was necessary, as a social thinker, to impose certain analytical and descriptive terms, but whenever possible naturalistic labels were used in place of the scientific concepts of professional sociologists.

In the latter part of the work, the reader may find some objection to the harsh language of street people. But, certain phrases were included so as to capture the realism of behavior in the social system of the "streets." Many of the phrases, while having sexual or racial connotations to the reader, are devoid of such meaning when used in the setting. Our concern is not in imposing values from the outside but in accepting the morality which has a collective meaning for street people.

The "shouters" will be treated first in that they have a higher degree of public visibility. They participate

in a public display of their feelings. That is not to say that other groups are devoid of such actions; instead, we are suggesting that the feelings of shouters are spontaneous and thus come into the publics' consciousness in the most dramatic way.

The next level of penetration into the inner domain brings to the surface the sub-group designated as the "action seekers." This group of actors harbor attitudes which conflict with what might be called, "worshipin' in the house of the lord." These attitudes are not displayable for consumption by the church.

Discovering the existence of and explicating the means-ends of the "band of believers in Christ" required the greatest amount of participation. As a group, they are virtually hidden from the public eye. Their ultimate ends are knowable only through participation in church activities which are closed off from the church's environment.

The chapters that follow are portraits of groups as they interact within the confines of either the church or street corners. Needless to say, the accompanying behavioral characteristics, beliefs, and values are manifested to a differing degree as actors interact in the world outside the church or street corner. The reader must also note that: each sub-group in the church does not

constitute an "ideal type." Not all church participants fit neatly into the three categories. Members in one group may also possess qualities found in the other two.

## CHAPTER II

### "SHOUTIN' FOR MY LORD"

#### Introduction

Chapter Two contains a description of the subgroup designated as "the shouters." It is safe to say that they are more likely to be women and their activities seem only remotely affected by the variable of age. Males sometimes exhibit intensive emotional responses but, unlike their female counterparts, age assumes greater importance in the regulation of their actions. For males, emotional behavior is displayed and occasionally ends in possession among teens and pre-teens more often than among adults.

Individuals who experience possession are more often than not general congregation members while the behavior of church "mothers" and other officials is typically limited to "gettin' happy." Social class is not a valuable tool in distinguishing shouters from non-shouters for the church is fairly homogeneous in that its members are drawn from the bottom of the stratification ladder. In short, the most feasible way to identify a shouter is through her (his) actions which range from mild emotionalism to possession.

In the next three chapters we will identify and discuss three sub-groups within the church, our analysis will focus particularly on the goals of each unit and the means and strategies through which they are realized. "Means" refers to conditions that further, or increase the likelihood, that a sub-group will accomplish its desired purpose. The purpose, or ultimate state resulting from adherence to said conditions, is referred to as "ends."

Through such means as active participation in the worship service, "making a joyful noise unto the lord," a stirring gospel sermon, and sympathetic identification with fellow shouters, shouters realize the end of emotional catharsis. As a sub-group, we will see that the shouters depend heavily on structural components internal to the church for realization of their desired ends.

Emotionalism and the Church: "Gettin' Happy"  
and "Fallin' Out"

Before beginning a discussion on the ends and means of shouters, we would like to mention briefly the existence of emotionalism in the church as a whole. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the lower-class Black Church is that it affords numerous opportunities for collective participation and emotional catharsis. That is,

worship events include responsive readings, singing the sermon, elaborate patterns of call and response, alter calls, and chances for congregation members to become primary actors. Individuals participate in these events with varying degrees of intensity. Hence, shouters cannot display the presence of the Holy Spirit without the collective participation and emotional catharsis put forth by the church as a whole. What we are saying is that: the worship service as a whole is characterized by emotional input from its members but emotionalism must be viewed in terms of gradation.

At the ore end of the scale, everyone is caught up in the rhythmic cadence of the worship service. The audience sets the pace by either becoming involved in the service or by appreciating it. The latter audience type is responsible for an emotionless service; whereas, the former is more conducive to action-oriented worship events. An involved audience, and a fiery sermon, set a pace that is ideal for those who shout.

The response of participants varies from low unintelligible moans, to phrases regarding identifiable experiences or beliefs - "my God is a good God," "He brought me from a mighty long ways," "I took one step and God took two," and "God we know you is a leanin' post" - to the rhythmic clapping of hands, to the musical shuffling and



tapping of one's feet, to a state of physical possession. The latter emotional response is the one which is most characteristic of shouters.

Unlike the moaning, hand clapping, and foot shuffling congregation members, shouters occupy the extreme position on the scale of emotional gradation. This position is characterized by physical displays which include rushing about the church in a frenzied state, wildly thrusting one's arms into the air and waving them in an uncontrollable fashion, weeping and/or hysterically laughing, a state involving violent jerking motions, unconsciousness, a state of physical fatigue, and various combinations of these. The less physical of these events, simply swaying as if mesmerized by the music or proclaiming one's feelings in a vocal manner, as referred to as "gettin' happy." Conversely, the more vigorous action-oriented behavioral forms are designated as "fallin' out."

Our point is that the majority of worshipers are involved in some form of emotional expression but only the shouters reach a state of possession. Only the shouters employ physical fervor to demonstrate their religiosity by defining their actions as the effect and the presence of the "Holy Spirit" as the cause. The relationship between cause and effect is summarized in the following welcoming address given by Mother Porter.

We would like to extend a welcome to our visitors from Allen A.M.E. Church.

We here at St. Paul are a Baptist church. Sometimes we do things that some folks don't understand. Sometimes we get happy and shout a little bit. It ain't because we're uncivilized or ignorant but because we're filled with the power of the Holy Ghos'. It may look strange to some of yall but when we baptist get the Holy Ghos' in us it has to come out. I for one, knows that being touched by the Holy Spirit is nothin' to be ashamed of.

When speaking of the Holy Spirit as a catalyst in producing estatic behavior, the role of the individual worshiper is played down but is nevertheless seen as an important element. The role of the individual is significant since the Holy Spirit must be received before religious feelings can flow outward into the external world. The Holy Spirit represents the presence of Christ. It is assumed that Christ is visiting St. Paul in a spiritual form and those who are believers merely open their hearts and let him come in.

When the spirit is present, it can be felt by some but there are others who are immune to its powers. Immunity is not a dent in the validity of the Holy Spirit but is instead a reflection upon personality traits of individual worshipers. The minister frequently comments of these traits by attacking the conservative nature of the congregation's acceptance of the spirit.

Some of you sit out there with your arms folded and ain't doin' nothin' but watchin'. You can't feel the Holy Spirit that way. St. Paul is a live church and the spirit is here . . . its' right here in St. Paul. If you want to feel it, you got to open up and let it in.

The Holy Spirit is intelligent, it ain't gon come into your life unless you open up your heart and receive it. Some of you don't know about the spirit. If you did, you couldn't sit there without openin' up a little bit. If you want to feel the Holy Spirit, you have to surrender yourself to God.

When a person has received the Holy Spirit, she (he) temporarily looses control over both her motor skills and the ability to communicate verbally. Thus, she enters a state in which the Holy Ghos' speaks to the congregation, not directly, but via an intermediary. As the spirit assumes physical control, and actual occupancy of the individual, the person's personality is disposed of and she then becomes a medium through which the Holy Spirit speaks. The minister carefully points out to non-believers that the person is not responsible for his actions for the physical manifestations of a shouter's behavior is attributed to an extraneous force.

I would like you to know that you have witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came through that door this morning. If you have never been touched by the spirit, you don't know what it's about. The spirit came to me one Sunday morning in Louisiana. A lot of the folks think you

be play actin' but I want to tell you from personal experience, the Holy Spirit ain't nothin' to play with. Huh!?

When the spirit enters your body, it moves through your toes and spreads up into your tired old legs. You can feel the warmth passin' into your chest and enterin' the ole heart. From there it creeps into your arms and thangs, and before you know it, its got control of your mind. You can't fight the Holy Spirit cause its' Gods way of lettin' us all know that he is truly a livin' God.

An outsider to the normal routine of worship events and to the behavioral manifestations that accompany shouting, is likely to have a functionalist interpretation of possession. Seeing a worshiper sprawled out on a church bench, with her head violently bumping the back of the structure while she loudly laughs in an hysterical manner as if being tickled by an invisible hand; or witnessing a young singer begin to jerk violently, and without warning sling the microphone into the audience, run from the stage and collide with the exit door, and then scratch, claw, and pound on it as if being pursued and the only sanctuary is on the other side, is enough to warrant a functionalist's view. From an outsider's vantage point, the flow of the worship service is disrupted in that congregational attention shifts from actors performing sanctioned activities such as leading a prayer, preaching, and singing a spiritual to the ecstatic person.

The functionalist perspective is inappropriate in that our aim is to view the actions of worshipers as they themselves define them. To participants in the setting, the overt behavior which accompanies shouting is not a disruption of the routine flow of the worship service. Their behavior is not treated as separate and apart from the worship event; instead it is incorporated into the performance. An emotional outbreak is produced by everyone's participation in the worship service, when ecstasy occurs musicians intensify their playing, singers reach back and put forth extra effort, and other shouters are "stirred-up." So, in many ways shouting contributes to the flow of regular worship events by intensifying congregational involvement and by demonstrating to both believers and non-believers that, "the Holy Spirit has stopped by St. Paul."

Socially, ecstatic behavior is an indication that the possessed individual is in touch with the Holy Spirit and is thereby properly serving the deity. There remains the possibility, however, that some actors enjoy the attention derived from ecstatic behavior and therefore "simulate" a state of possession.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful whether

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, Melville J. Herskovits, The New World Negro (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1966). Herskovits undertakes a description of the "Trinidad Shouters." In doing so he points out their

a simulated state can be clearly distinguished from an actual instance of possession, either by the writer or by persons "raised up in the church." For those who are unable to attain an emotional release through actual possession, perhaps simulation is a form of catharsis within itself.

A catharsis is a form of emotional release finding its first conceptualization in the philosophical writing of Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> The concept was originally employed in his discussion of the theatrical art form of tragedy but has since been applied to Freudian psychoanalysis and religious expiation.

A catharsis implies that certain passions which already exist in a person such as pity, fear, sorrow, joy, etc., are activated and brought out into the external world. Thus, the actor brings into a setting latent feelings which are consciously expressed under certain conditions (means). Latent feelings and the existence of conducive conditions are not enough; there must be a willingness to attain a cathartic state (goal).

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(Cont.) ability to not only detect simulated possession but to determine the goal the actor is possessed by as well.

<sup>2</sup>See for example, Aristotle's Politics Book (VII); the text of Bekker; with an English translation by W.E. Bollacl; together with short introductory essays by A. Lang, (London: Longmans, 1877).

Aristotle envisioned that actors in tragedies obtained a catharsis by playing out their emotions in connection with the role they performed. In a like manner, the audience was able to dispell their tensions by identifying with the protagonist as he moved about the stage and the tragedy unfolded. If our diagnosis of Aristotles' philosophical views is correct, he saw tragedies as being responsible for a catharsis on two different levels. The level of actual participation and the level of pseudo participation which involves the audiences' identification with the feelings being expressed in the drama unfolding before them.

In many respects, the worship services at St. Paul resemble a tragedy; a human tragedy being played out in front of a live audience with the actors' lines emerging from life experiences. "Shoutin' for the lord," for some actors, is an essential element in the attainment of an emotional catharsis. A shouter's own anxieties are directed outward during periods of possession. "Sister" Tucker had this to say about the relationship between her ecstatic experience and a satisfying release from tensions. For her, possession has often ended in spiritual renewal.

It's hard to put in words what I feels like after the Holy Spirit has left me. But I'll do my best. Well . . . sometimes the load gets heavy and I feels like I can't carry it no longer. Seems like my troubles

get so big till I don't know if I can make it anymore. But I takes them to church with me and ask the Holy Spirit to give me strength.

I invites the spirit in and it usually comes. When its' gon', my troubles is still there, but the load ain't as heavy as it was fo the spirit touched me. I feels a whole lots better . . . ready to face next week. Every Sunday mornin' I tries to leave parts of my troubles at the church.

Tensions are relieved not so much by observing but by shouting and participating wholeheartedly in the worship service. The results obtained by "Sister" Tucker parallel the catharsis achieved by those who would occupy the position of actors in a tragedy. The key is her involvement. The importance of acting out one's emotions through becoming an involved actor is stressed by the minister as he continually urges members of the audience to participate by saying, "you only get out of the service what you put into it."

Sympathetic Identification  
as a Means to Catharsis

The reader must be cautioned at this point. Saying that emotional catharsis and active participation are related is not the same as saying that a lack of involvement means the absence of a catharsis. It is quite obvious that not all shouters who experience a catharsis participate



at a high level of intensity, nor is this necessary since one actor's ecstatic behavior may in turn serve as a catalyst in evoking a response from a fellow shouter whose visible participation borders on the minimal.

At this time we would like to introduce the concept of "sympathetic identification." The concept is not one which is used by the actors themselves,<sup>3</sup> but, we find it to be a beneficial tool in ordering data on the catharsis experienced by shouters and potential shouters whose participation is of a secondary nature, i.e., shouters involved in pseudo participation, or what we referred to in the preceding pages as the second level of catharsis. Sympathetic identification is a process wherein a potential shouter gains emotional support by attributing to himself a ready comprehension of the mental state of the actual shouter.

The act of getting happy has some effect on the congregation but falling out is an influencing factor of greater magnitude. When a worshiper falls out, it involves

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<sup>3</sup>There arise situations in the research enterprise in which the researcher must, himself, impose artificial concepts to order social behavior that appears before him. This is especially true in situations where research subjects have no naturalistic concept to explain their behavior. We as researchers must remember that actors are not always interested in an analytical breakdown of their behavior.

a number of other actors. Groups of white clad ushers will rush about the church, reach the possessed person, remove the victim's glasses and protect them from harming themselves on church furniture and other objects, furiously attempt to fan the worshiper back to a state of consciousness, or simply let the Holy Spirit run its course. If the possessed individual appears to be deeply possessed and their behavior does not subside after a few minutes, or if they are totally uncontrollable a different strategy is called for.

One usher will grab the shouter by the feet, another will take hold of the upper portion of the body and together they lift the possessed into the air and remove them from the worship service by carrying them through a set of doors at the rear of the sanctuary. The ushers function as a mechanism which distinguishes getting happy from the more physical act of falling out. Their movements also help turn the focus of the congregations attention on the ecstatic person. While sharing the stage together, ushers and shouters stir the feelings of potential shouters. We suspect that usher involvement is the initial beginning of sympathetic identification. Sister Rodgers had this to say about their role.

The ushers be on they job when a member gets the spirit. I usually don't

pay no mind to what they (worshippers) doin' till the ushers get there. Then I know its for real. That's when I start to feel . . . kind a . . . well I feel some- thin' but I can't explain it.

The process involving the transmission of feelings from actual shouter to potential shouter means that the latter individual plays a role similar to that of the researcher. Like an investigator, she becomes a brilliant observer but does not completely understand; the process is one of involvement but yet detachment. "Mother" Williams comments on the complexity of the shouter-potential shouter relationship in the ensuing passage.

Every once and a while, I get a little happy myself. But not all the time! The Holy Ghos' ain't like us you know. You can't make it come in, all you can do is open up your heart and ask it to touch you. When it don't touch my soul, I don't get all worried and upset cause I know its' according to my fathers' (God) wishes.

When the Holy Spirit walks around me and touches my friends I feels a little somethin' myself. I gets a warm feelin' deep down inside when I see the Holy Ghos' at work. I was tellin' sister Boyd the same thing just the other day. When a member receives the spirit this ole sister is right there with em.

The experiences of Sister Todd are similar to those of Mother Williams. She too speaks of an identification with the actual shouter.

It makes me remember the good feeling that God gave to me. If you ever felt it you'd remember it too! When I am a livin' witness to the Holy Ghos' washin' away the worries of my friends I don't feel so down cause I know the master (God) will heal my wounds too. Seein' other folks gettin' filled with the Holy Ghos' makes me try harder. When I see em cryin' I think about my own burdens. But when the shoutin' over, I know they feel warm inside. Just thinkin' about they good feeling lifts a whole lots of weight off my shoulders. If the service ain't a live one . . . I get something out of it . . . but that feelin' just ain't there.

Sympathetic identification, and the end result of an emotional release, occurs when an actor assumes the mental state being projected outward by one of his fellow religionists. We feel that an actor can also attain a mild form of release not by identification with a single individual but with a number of persons experiencing ecstasy. A state of collective ecstasy aids the achievement of an emotional release, and may in fact heighten a worshiper's catharsis.

As might be expected, there is no instrument yet constructed to measure this heightened catharsis. However, we can take note of comments as they vary from instances of individual ecstasy to instances of collective ecstasy. When doing so we find that shouters see collective ecstasy as "something we've been needin' for a long time." The feelings produced by, not just one person experiencing ecstasy but several, are explained by Sister Richardson.

That's just what we needed here at St. Paul. This place ain't been broke up in a long time. When everybody puts everything they got into the service, I think the whole church feels a whole lots better. I shō know I do; it kinda stirs my soul.

Collective emotionalism is seen as an indication of a good worship event. Likewise, if you were absent from one of those events "you missed a great treat." The treat of course being all that goes into "breakin' up the house." A broken-up house refers to a relative state of pandemonium, a collective ecstasy, which is brought about when there is no longer a primary actor in the setting.

There is so much action that the structure of the worship service is altered to the extent that congregational members are no longer able to focus attention on any one actor nor is the minister able to control the flow of things. Following instances of collective ecstasy, the amounts of energy released becomes apparent. Shouters appear as if they are physically drained as they sit in a limp fashion with ushers and friends furiously fanning away the oncoming beads of perspiration.

Not all emotion-prone persons receive an emotional uplift by virtue of becoming a primary actor (shouter) or through the process of sympathetic identification. However, we suspect that the collective nature of ecstasy must be of some value even to those who relieve tension

in a less noticed covert manner, such as weeping, moaning, and sincere singing. Nick, who attended church with me on several occasions, when asked why she didn't shout, stated: "That's them folks business, I get something out of the service by just goin' there and join' in." If an emotionally prone person does not achieve a complete catharsis by fully playing out her emotions, some tension release must take place in that an individuals' call and response, hand clapping, and/or foot shuffling are activities which catch and hold a worshiper's attention and thus provide a temporary relief fom life's demands.

Briefly put, shouting is a means of demonstrating, through dramatized involvement, that one has received the Holy Ghos'. A shouter who called herself "sanctified" stated that:

Ain't nothin' wrong with shoutin' for the Lord. We need more of it in the church. People always criticizing folks for fallin' out. They just don't understand it . . . ain't no harm in it. When we church people watch baseball or basketball games we shout to the top of our voices. But when we come to church we sit and watch. Don't want to get involved.

If you can shout and cheer at ball games you should be willing to shout and cheer for my lord. Anything that's dead needs to be buried. This supposed to be a church. You shout at ball games but you won't shout for Jesus!

### "Testimony"

The religious interpretation, by shouters, of "gettin' happy" and "fallin' out" is revealed in testimonies. Testimony typically occurs when individual worshipers are provided an opportunity to address the congregation on occasions which include the responsibility for hosting and coordinating programs, the receiving of praise for services rendered to the church, announcements regarding both past and future church functions, and during prayer meetings. All of the aforementioned opportunities for testimony are built into the structure of worship events, but such is not always the case.

Many of the most enthusiastic shouters, while being overcome by the Holy Spirit, will suddenly and dramatically seize the audiences' attention by loudly testifying in the middle of a song, a sermon, a prayer, or during the reading of announcements.

A testimony is the act of verbally conveying one's beliefs in the divine to the congregation at large. In many ways, it resembles a miniature sermon in which the testifier is able to fuse her personal feelings and excitement about God with the language of the church culture. In most testimonies, the testifier proclaims her religious commitment by listing and then commenting upon her personal

contacts with the deity. As one respondent tactfully put it, "testifying is a matter of showin' em by tellin' em."

While the typical testimony provides an opportunity for congregation members to reaffirm their religious beliefs in the presence of one another, it takes a different form when used among shouters.<sup>4</sup> To exemplify the difference in the content of testimony which distinguishes the verbal comments of shouters from those of other worshipers, several examples will be presented. By doing so, the reader will better understand the different themes that characterize testimony.

The following testimonies by Brother Muldrew, Brother Linebarger, and Deacon Hattex are examples of typical testimonies in that they stress "what God has done for me."

- (1) When somebody does me wrong, I look straight to heaven for Gods help. I puts it in God's hands. I take it out of my hands and always tries to put in in God's hands. He's always done me right! If I'd known I was comin' into a world like this one, I'd have (he laughs out loud) turned around. This is a wicked world. A mean world and I am glad I am with Jesus. He has all power. All power is in his hands. It may be the last time you hear me speak but if my sister, my brothers, mother and father

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<sup>4</sup>Typical testimony is here meant to refer to the type of testimony given most often by "members of the band." The sub-group will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.



walk off and leave me . . . I'll still be with Jesus. Cause Jesus has watched over me and I want to thank him . . . .

- (2) We have a nice crowd on hand this morning. That's enough to make me want to praise the lord! There are many who would like to be hear this mornin' but couldn't make it. I for one, know about Gods' goodness. And I truly thank him for putin' life in my body this morning. I thank him for watchin' the watchmen that did the watchin' of our city last night. The lord has been good to me and my family. He clothed me in my right mind this mornin', fed my family, and guided me safely to the doors of St. Paul. That's why I praise him every chance I get.
- (3) God has brought me from a mighty long ways. All the way from the cotton fields of Mississippi to where I am at now. Some of you know what I am talkin' about. Those days in Mississippi were dark days and Jesus was the only light. Pickin' cotton for \$1.25 a hundred (pounds) didn't feed me and my family . . . God fed me when I got hungry and gave me water when I was thirsty. I'd be a fool if I didn't thank him for seein' me through the darkness.

Shouters, during their periodic testimonies, usually exhibit a movement away from the theme of "what God has done for me." Their testimonies emphasize more the verbal communication of feelings than statements of what binds them to God. Rather than having the nature and strength of their beliefs as a point of accent, testimony by shouters has an aura of celebration about it as it entails more of a festive approach to worship.

There are those who would suggest that the verbal communication of feelings is still an announcement of "what God has done for me;" especially since the deity is the spiritual force behind those feelings. We cannot wholly deny such an accusation and still maintain academic integrity. However, the writer's claim is that, although testimony by shouters contains the previously mentioned trait, shouters do not normally stress the point of what God has done as much as they do the euphoric feelings which accompany "God's goodness."

Testimonies rendered by a visiting evangelist from New Hope Baptist Church and Sister Linda Wright are examples of those given by shouters as they attest to the attainment of a spiritual high.

- (1) I don't know what you came here for but I came here to praise the lord. I am alive in my soul and I feel alright. I believe in the Holy Ghos' cause the Holy Ghos' is the greatest feel good medicine there is! Oh! Haleuh luya! Praise the Lord!

You young folks thank them green plants make ya feel alright but I hear to tell ya . . . you just don't know. You ain't never felt the way the Holy Ghos' can make you feel. The Holy Ghos' fills me with so much joy till I can't help but sing so everybody can hear it. I feel so good till, till . . . don't get me wound up now, cause I can tell ya about the Holy Ghos' all day. If there ain't no Holy Ghos' in the service, somethin' is wrong!

- (2) First, givin' honor to God, and our pastor, Rev. Green. I just wanted to tell everybody this mornin' that St. Paul is my church home and I love her.

I feel at home here 'cause folks don't mind ya shoutin' now and then. I love St. Paul cause it ain't no big folks' [referring to social class] church. It reminds me a lot of down home [the South]. Down home we used to get the Holy Ghos' and get to feelin' mighty good and nobody knowed any different.

Negroes don' moved from down home up here to Omaha, Nebraska and now they don't want ya to show 'em how you feel. Ain't no harm in gettin' the Holy Ghos', anything that makes you feel that good can't be wrong! And if it is, I just have to confess that it's the best sin I done ever enjoyed. And I am gon' keep on enjoying the feelin' that the Holy Ghos' brangs to me.

I am here as a livin' witness this mornin'. A livin' witness to the power of the Holy Ghos'. If the pastor will excuse me this mornin', I am going to tell you like James Brown says on his record [a cry comes from the audience; "what he say, Sister Wright? Gon and tell it!"]. It feels good, no nice . . . better than sugar and spice [the audience reacts with rounds of laughter, "Amens," and a variety of phrases, i.e., "go ahead on Sis. Wright," "tell it, child," etc.].

Testimonies by shouters emphasize not only the expression of positive feelings but also the communication of those feelings so that co-religionists may experience them and at the same time bear witness.

### Sacred-Secular Connotations and Shouter Goals

The goals of shouters are achieved through a variety of means (i.e., see introductory section of this chapter), all of which are carried out with the intent of "having a good time." Such phrasing as "having a good time" makes one aware that shouters are constantly on the verging of engaging in extra religious activities. For having a good time carries with it certain secular connotations. Although many Black Churches are more permissive than their white protestant counterparts, attending church to have a good time is still a questionable enterprise.

In seeking to destroy misconceptions (held by the devoutly religious) about their behavior, shouters have fused their festival approach with the religious intent of the church. The fusion is a deliberate rationalization, by shouters, of their desired goal. As earlier statements pointed out, they view the activities of getting happy and falling out as cheering or working for the lord. So, the goal of shouters becomes twofold: "having a good time," which has secular connotations, but "in the name of the lord" which is behavior found in the sacred world.

The infrequent testimony by shouters is oftentimes concerned with the impending conflict between having a good time and worshipping in a religious setting.

I am here to have a good time tonight. I hope you're here to have a good time with the lord too! Some of you ask why us sanctified women wear these long dresses. Well . . . when us get to fallin' out you'll see why. I am here to - as they say - "do my thang." I don't have to be here tonight. I could be havin' a good time somewhere else but we must put the lord first in whatever we do.

Statements such as the above are aimed at encouraging fellow shouters by urging them to get involved, but at the same instance they are defensive in nature. They strike a defensive posture by informing shouters of why and for whom they are allowed to participate in an almost unrestrictive manner. By rationalizing their actions through the use of encouraging, yet defensive, statements the goals of shouters remains within the boundaries of religious respectability.

To many non-shouters, having a good time is not condemned but the accompanying physical and verbal displays are a matter of individual taste. Despite their individual preferences, the interpretation of having a good time, made by non-shouting co-religionists, similarly legitimizes the validity which shouters attribute to their intentions. Deacon Porter demonstrated this point quite clearly as he addressed the issue of legitimacy within the small group context of Sunday school.

We have to continue to respect one another as Christians. We're all children of God no matter how you slice it. The other day a fella, I won't tell you his name cause it don't make no difference sense he ain't a member of this church. Anyway, this fella asked me if there was any difference between folks havin' a good time in juke joints (bars) and havin' a good time in church.

My answer was yes. The difference is between havin' a time for God and servin' Satan. I personally have a good time in church myself. All of us should! But I don't believe in gettin' carried away. That's Deacon Porters view though!

As I said we have to start respecting one another as Christians. God moves each of us in different ways. Cause Deacon Galvin has a good time and shows it . . . and I have a good time and don't . . . that don't spell right and wrong. If we put the lord first in everything we do . . . its hard to find faults. I think we hear at St. Paul do a wonderful job in respectin' one another as Christians. I have been here twelve years and I know! Now we must pass it on to our young ones.

Deacon Porter's para-sermon hints at his personal feelings regarding worshiping and expressions of enjoyment. His declaration that, "we have to continue to respect one another," is an indication group differentiation. But in spite of their differences, they are pulled together by being "Christians" and "children of God."

Sunday school is an ideal situation in which to discuss matters pertaining to group differences. For it is an event that brings together adults who are willing to

share their personal opinions about the functioning of St. Paul. Though the devoutly religious may have personal qualms about the secular nature of shouter behavior, and though they often attribute a higher degree of sincerity to their own covert religious expressions, having a good time is acceptable if a concern for God is given priority.

#### Music as a Means

To increase the chances of a catharsis, shouters are heavily dependent upon music. Music is a means for the realization of the Holy Spirit and for having a good time. In order for the Holy Spirit to stop by, many shouters feel that it must be demonstrated that they are "havin' church" at St. Paul. Music is a sufficient but not a necessary condition in the demonstration process. "Sister" Boyd's appeal for choir support, for a program being sponsored by the Trustee Board, illustrates the believed connection between music and the descending of the Holy Spirit.

The Trustee Board is sponsoring a candlelight worship service this evening, March the 24, here at St. Paul. If you miss this, you're sure to miss a treat. Food will be served in the dining room of the church by the Eager Beaver Club; so we ask you to come out and support them.

Our special guest will be the Soul Seekers and the Gospel Falcons. I don't mean to sound like I am stepin' outa line - but I want to say this to members of our choir. Sometimes I know it seems like we don't appreciate your great work . . . but believe me we do. We of the Trustee Board would like for you to come out in full force and lend us a hand with our program. We needs yō support if we gonna have church and have it right! We need every singin' voice we can find to bring the spirit back to St. Paul. It was here this mornin'! So, want you please come and we can raise our voices so high that the spirit can't help but come in. The spirit will come. All we got to do is let em know they havin' church at 1809 (church's address). Let's all pitch in so we can have a good time. Thank you.

The lively rhythmic music being played in the church is very supportive of having a good time. The use of electrical instruments to accompany the well trained musicians creates an atmosphere similar to that found in an urban blues performance.<sup>5</sup> Sister Wright, who is herself a professional musician and an occasional shouter, had this to say about the music of the Gospel Falcons whose home base is St. Paul.

Huh! You thank B.B. King can play that guitar! B.B. King is somethin' but he ain't got nothin' on these fellas. He

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<sup>5</sup>To better examine and contrast church music with urban blues performances, the researcher attended a number of blues concerts (i.e., Muddy Waters, Albert King, B.B. King, John L. Hooker, Ike and Tina Turner, and a host of less familiar artists).



a have to go a little taste to out do this dynamic group. We're just thankful they chose to play they music for the lord. They can stirr yō soul like some of these other fellas playin' in these night clubs and thangs.

The church audience is an attentive one but they are also physical. Shouters are a key ingredient for an unrestricted rather than a sit-down-and-listen type of audience. The blues style of music can be heard in bar-rooms where it also nurtures a get-up-and-shake-it type of audience. In both settings, the guitar is the primary instrument with the piano adding to its rhythmic range. Drums, organs, and sometimes an occasional horn furnish the necessary bass.

In place of the "bumpin' and grindin'" which characterizes the blues performance, the church audience is typically involved in behavior which only borders on dancing (i.e., standing in the aisles with arms raised while swaying back and forth, an unpatterned jumping up and down to the music, swaying while in a seated position, clapping one's hands and shuffling the feet, etc.). Save for restrictions on church behavior, some in the congregation would probably prefer to be dancing in the aisles.

Since both the form and style of church music are frequently secular, the devoutly religious will sometimes question its validity. Questions are raised since there

exists the possibility that shouters are more interested in the tonalities produced by the various instruments than they are in the religious message transmitted through the lyrics.

Also of concern are the musicians. For all practical purposes, they are masters of "working-up" the congregation, getting the shouters involved, and then cooling out the house. Musicians work-up the audience by taking the physical display of an actor and keeping it before the congregation by enthusiastically playing additional verses of a song. Or, they join in a call and response routine with the minister, with their instruments being the source of the response. Once they have helped create an effect, music may be used to return control of the service to the minister (i.e., the cooling out process is characterized by a musical style meant more for appreciation than involvement). Thus the period of audience excitement is gradually curtailed as they are subjected to a change in moods.

In spite of the musicians' ability to stir the congregation and help with the functioning of the worship service, there appears to be some discrepancy as to the motivational force behind their music and its relation to those who shout. The devoutly religious are of the belief that: persons who work for the "devil" are capable of arousing the emotions of others. Therefore, shouters are

often guilty of submitting to "false witnesses." In lecturing to the adult Sunday school class, Deacon Powell put forth such an accusation.

When I was comin' up in the church - some of yall old enough to remember - they didn't allow just anybody in the church.

I want you to hear me good cause what I am about to say might offend somebody. We have to be careful who we let in our church. The devil is everywhere! If you let him he'll get in the pulpit.

Years ago, we didn't have music like we have it now. Singin' and clappin' the hands was enough. Now some churches got orchestras in em. Tryin' to keep up with the joneses, some churches has brought in professional musicians . . . and the devil has come in on they coattails. Just cause they sing about God and some folks go to shoutin' when they sing, don't mean nothin'. The devil can fool ya and have ya thinkin' you servin' God and all the time ya be servin' him (devil). Don't get me wrong! I ain't sayin' everybody is guilty but we ought to check our closets. We might find somethin'.

Shouters who believe that the Holy Spirit is invited into St. Paul via music must somehow rationally explain (to the highly religious) their musical appreciation. Rationalizations are in order; especially since their involvement in the music of the worship service is a sufficient condition in attempts to reach the end state of a catharsis. Musical forms are distinguished from secular music and legitimized not by virtue of a distinctive rhythmic pattern but on the basis of subject matter. As

"Mother" Williams, a staunch Christian who described herself to me as an "old fashion no nonsense down home baptist,"<sup>6</sup> put it:

These young folks and they music is somethin' else. Some of us olsters ain't crazy about it. But the church is made up of youngsters, oldsters, and inbetweensters. So we got to move over a little bit. As long as their singin' God's praises and raisin' Jesus' name through song, I guess its' alright.

Since singing is classified as a way of worshipping, shouters are able to combine religious beliefs, secular music styles, and vigorous participation in their quest for a cathartic end through legitimized means. In addition, there are worshipers who believe that even the secular musicians will, in time, be touched by the "lord." Evangelistic hopes regarding both musicians and music are contained in the thought of Brother Linebarger, and no doubt others as well.

I can remember back when the young man playing the drums worked in a bar across the street. My wife was a barmaid and I use to drink there all the time. But music came from heaven . . . and the

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<sup>6</sup>When Mother Williams described herself as an "old fashion no nonsense down home baptist" she was commenting on her religious convictions. She mentioned that she was "raised up in the church" and felt that the church was a place to "get ready." Her aim was to, as she put it, "get prepared for the comin' of the lord and leave the foolishness to them that hasn't been born again."

devil stole it. The lord is gonna get it back though!

Witnessing a Stirring Gospel Sermon as a Means

A final means employed by shouters in efforts to achieve their desired end of emotional catharsis is the desire to hear and witness a stirring gospel sermon. A sermon containing qualities which initiate emotional responses is called "a great message." Rather than discuss the impact of the gospel sermon strictly as a means, we wish to combine its importance with the various strategies existing in the church which are used to facilitate the attainment of ends. It should be kept in mind that these strategies, although being external to individual shouters (employed by others in the setting to elicit a desired response from shouters), provide mechanisms which are a supplement to the means of active participation, making a joyful noise, and interacting with fellow emotionalists. With this in mind, we will begin our discussion of strategies with an explanation of the role of a stirring gospel sermon as a means to an end.

Strategies: Facilitating the  
Means of "Shouters"

We are fully aware that the researcher has, at this point, introduced a new concept to the reader. The concept may create some confusion in that it is closely related to what we have previously been referring to as "means." To add clarity to the forthcoming discussion, perhaps it is best to state explicitly the analytical difference between a means and a strategy.

In an earlier portion of this chapter, a means was defined as a condition that furthers, or increases the likelihood, that a sub-group will accomplish its desired purpose. If a means is a condition, then a strategy can best be described as a set of techniques utilized by ministers, musicians, and other crucial actors to supplement the creation of sufficient conditions.

A "great message" is an entity in which the distinction between a strategy and a mean is readily seen. The "message" is a means to an end for shouters but the minister uses an assortment of techniques to create the conditions which comprise a great message (i.e., techniques include intonation and hesitation which lead to the condition of inspiration).

Strategies which Define "A Great Message"

Data collected during periods of observations suggest that, the conduct of ministers is shaped by their attempts at anticipating the behavior to be exhibited by various types of worshipers. More specifically, their attitudes toward sermons are oftentimes a reflection of what they believe shouters will appreciate. Regarding this matter, Rev. Green was no exception.

Tonight is first Sunday and we askin' all members . . . all members to be present for communion service. Rev. Kelley from Morning Star Baptist Church will bring the message. This man is a dynamic preacher. He brought the Holy Spirit here the last time and he'll do it tonight. Everytime he comes he breaks up the house and I know that's what some of you likes to see. This man is God-sent and can really preach. I just know he's gonna preach till some of yall come and shout unto the lord!

Though the behavioral manifestations expected of shouters do not always appear, data do indicate that there is a high degree of consistency between the perceptions of the clergy and what shouters actually do appreciate in a sermon. To worshiper like Sister Richardson, a good sermon is in many ways synonymous with a dynamic one.

Elder Lambert shō knows what he's doin when he gets in the pulpit. Child . . . that man is a natural born gospel preacher. Rev. Green's a good preacher hisself but Elder Lambert is somethin' else. That man has the whole church lit-up every-time he preaches. I just love to hear him

bring the message. Folks know he's gonnu preach so they come built for comfort and brings they shoutin' shoes with em'.

What people define as a stirring sermon can be illustrated in a number of ways. But to simplify the matter and thus increase the readers' understanding, we will indentify the major strategies used by the preacher in delivering the sermon. When these strategies are coupled with bits of data, the concept of "a great message" will take on greater meaning. Sympathetic identification and inspiration, which together make the sermon a means for the realization of a catharsis, are the two main characteristics of a great message and they are achieved through the following strategies.

A. Devotion and "Soul stirrin' prayers"

During the worship service, before the minister "brings the message," the congregation is subjected to what might be termed a religious warming up. The congregation is prepared for the minister's performance by way of devotion. Devotion is a pre-service event which starts with a small audience that includes deacons, a few congregation members who actually arrive on time, and a small number of church mothers and hanger-oners, from Sunday school.

The small number of worshipers increases as the ushers gradually let others into the sanctuary at



intermediate periods so as to not disturb the service. Slowly the congregation is moved toward the sermon as the two deacons who conduct devotional services either pray or offer up spirituals while sitting or kneeling at the "moaning bench."

The moaning bench is a large wooden table located directly in front of, and beneath, the pulpit. It is from here that deacons customarily address the congregation. It is also from the moaning bench that emotions and feelings are first expressed. Feelings are aroused as the deacons emit "long and soul stirrin' prayers" which are often miniature versions of a sermon. Following this, the service is turned over to the musicians. So, before the minister comes to deliver the message, the congregation is kept waiting while a host of other performers carry out their duties. Thus, the minister inherits an audience that has already been warmed up by several musical selections and a host of soul stirring prayers.

#### B. Sympathetic Identification through Common Life Messages

To establish empathy between himself and his congregation, a minister delivers a message common to the lives of his constituency. The message is presented so that there exist little or no status difference between the minister and his congregation. Portions of a sermon will

contain stories, antidotes, or a few sentences which define the pastor as a person who has experienced the same life conditions that his members have. The evening passages, taken from a message delivered by Rev. Green, are prime examples.

A lot of folks ask me - Green, why do you preach so hard? How can you do all that screamin' and hollin' in front of all them folks? Dancin' and runnin' round up there like a fool. Look like somethin' done took over yō mind!

The minister has posed a question that conveys his style of action-oriented preaching. More importantly, the opening questions capture the attention of the audience. Once he has done so, he is ready to forge an identification between himself and his followers.

All I can do is just look at em awhile and say . . . Man! . . . Man don't you know I am just like you. A preacher ain't no different from nobody else! I said . . . a preacher is just like everybody else and that goes for Green too! I am a man, made of flesh and blood just like you is. I went to the back dō in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama just like some of ya'll.

The man had me in the cotton field, slavin' like a mule. And just like you, I thought he liked me when . . . I said I thought he liked me when he let me work inside. Inside the packin' houses up north.

What you tryin' to say now D.J. (talking to himself - his full name is D.J. Green)? I am tryin' to say . . . I looks at a pretty woman once and a while, just like some of yall do. Some of you deacons

know what I am talkin' about. Ain't no need of you women frownin' up out there. I see some of yall switchin' around hear and popin' yō dress tails at these mens [laughter from congregation]! I am hear to tell you this morning . . . that I D.J. Green ain't no different than nobody else.

Beings that God made me a Negro - and I believe he knowed what he was doing - I have seen the dark side of life. I have struggled, cried, fell to my knees and prayed, then got up and struggled some mō. I know what its' like to go without . . . without food! Without clothes, and sometimes without hope!

The minister has, to this point, communicated to his congregation that he too has suffered the trials and tribulations of life. He has also admitted that he, as a messenger of God, is subject to the same temptations that result in the committing of sins. For as a minister, it is possible for him to let his bodily temptations overcome his christian ideals.

Having communicated common life messages, he is now ready to strengthen the identifying bond by suggesting a religious likeness between himself and congregation members. He does so by finally answering the question he posed at the outset.

And folks have the nerve to ask Green why he preaches so hard! Let me tell you why Green preaches so hard! I preach so hard cause I got just one mō river to cross! I preach so hard cause my mother is waitin' to help me cross! I preach so hard cause just like you . . . Green don't want his soul to be lost.

It is difficult to attest to the exact effect that common life messages have on the congregation. With some many other things happening during the sermon; namely, call and response, hesitation, and intonation, it is difficult to single out the effect a single strategy has. Through a careful examination of our data we were, however, able to find evidence which lends support to the idea of common life experiences being a defining element of a "great message."

The setting is the adult Sunday school class, the speaker is Sister Wright, and the topic is "Education for the Ministry."<sup>7</sup>

Education means something but I believe a pastor needs more than schoolin'. This is my own personal opinion, and I might be wrong, but everything a good preacher needs to know ain't in no books.

Books can't tell you how to preach with a little fire in yo sermons. They can't teach you to preach from yo soul. Us Baptist like a little feelin' in the message.

How can a preacher make you feel some- thin' he ain't never felt his self. A good gospel preacher got to know what he talkin' about. He gotta have traveled up and down lifes' troubled highways.

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<sup>7</sup>Taken from a text published by the National Baptist Convention entitled the National Baptist Convention Quarterly (Chicago, Illinois, 1974).

On another occasion, while complaining about the minister's absence and the taking over of his duties by the younger assistant pastor, Sister Wellman commented thusly:

I don't want nobody preachin' to me that ain't been there themself . . . he can't make me feel nothin'. What good is a preacher if he ain't climbed the ruff side of the mountain. If he ain't been there I don't want him preachin' to me cause he can't stir my soul. Ain't nothin' in them theology books about preachin', and I mean preachin' not readin' a speech.

Both respondents have a preference for a minister who has experienced life. Whether or not a sermon activates any "feelings" is partially dependent on this factor. Whether or not aroused feelings will erupt into cathartic behavior is dependent on the personality make-up of individual worshipers. One thing is certain though, common life messages is a technique whereby feelings are aroused and is therefore classified as an ingredient of a great message.

#### C. Sympathetic Identification through Hesitation

Hesitation is a tactic practiced by the minister in his efforts to further congregational participation and involvement. As part of the technique, the minister delivers his message, all the while building in intensity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>It is difficult to capture the rhythmic flow of

They hung him on a cross and drove spikes  
 in his hands. They nailed his feet to  
 the cross. Oh yes they did! Oh Lord!  
 They put a crown of thorns around his  
 head. And he bled! He bled!

He bled till blood ran down his side! He  
 hung there till the moon ran down in  
 blood!! But the grave wasn't strong enough  
 to hold em and he rose!! He rose!! He rose!!  
 And he said . . . And he said . . .

The sermon moved from a general statement to a point where the minister approached the peak of his excitement. In the process of doing so, he preached with a rhythmic cadence, hurriedly wiped perspiration from his brow with a large white handkerchief, and began to loosen up in his movements by rocking and reeling in the pulpit. He hesitates by letting a few moments of unexpected silence follow the phrases "and he said," "and he said." The pauses are a break in his movement toward a peak of excitement and he appears as if lost for words.

It is precisely at this moment that audience involvement and participation come about. From different locations in the sanctuary can be heard supportive phrases offered up by deacons, church mothers, and the congregation in general. One woman raises her voice and shatters the split second of silence by shouting, "Help him Lord, Help

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(Cont.) the sermon here. The reader is asked to pay attention to punctuation, especially the exclamation points, in order to get a feel for the increase in intensity.

him Lord, show em the way." A deacon on the other side of the room responds by saying, "come on," "come on," "come on!" And still another worshiper can be heard to say, "tell it reverend, tell it reverend, don't let the devil tie up yō tongue." With the increased support from the congregation, all of which takes only a matter of seconds, the minister is then ready to continue with the message.

Hesitation seems to be a relatively simple exercise to perform, but it is not. The technique requires that the minister, be aware of where he is in his sermon, be able to read the mood of the audience (how involved they are), and above all else it requires the proper voice inflection.

The writer has observed several younger pastors attempt to preach in a lively fashion without audience involvement. Several hesitated in the aforementioned fashion, but without the polish of their veteran counterparts. On more than a few of these occasions the moments of silence were broken by the young ministers themselves. Where the audience did not respond, the ministers had to break the flow of their sermon and issue a verbal call to the congregation. The calls consisted of such statements as "yall help me now," "yall want me to preach this mornin'?" or "yall don't wanta have church this mornin', I might as well sit down." Verbal calls of this nature usually had the same effect as the more difficult

technique of hesitation and the young ministers were then able to continue their sermon.

Worshippers, when asked about the sermon in general, but more specifically about hesitation, responded with answers that can be grouped in three categories. One group of statements, which is typified by Sister Green's responses, discussed hesitation in relation to the Holy Spirit.

When you see a minister get lost for his words he tryin' to hear what's comin' from above. The message a minister brings comes from the Holy Spirit. When I see him waitin' like that, I kinda feels for him and ask the Spirit to help em.

Perhaps such an interpretation explains why some members verbally shout supportive phrases. At any rate, hesitation in this instance is proof to some worshippers that sermons stem from inspiration rather than from a written text.

Secondly, there were a few worshippers who described hesitation in relation to what we have been calling sympathetic identification. Typical of these persons was Brother Rollins.

These preachers, they take you along on a kind of a ride. You'll be rolling right along with em and then (he snaps his fingers) - nothin'. You don't know what to think! But somehow you think he's in trouble or something and you sort-a . . . fell for em. You know what I mean? You wonta put words in his mouth but ya can't.



Finally, there are old established church people, like Deacon Galvin, who view hesitation as a deliberate call for assistance.

I been with the Rev. for eighteen years now and I pretty much know how he preaches. When I see em pause like that, I know he lookin' for help from somewhere. A preacher can't bring the message by himself. He's got to have somebody with him to bring a good message. The church is got to be with him.

Despite the three variations in the interpretation of hesitation, the tactic does, indeed, foster increased congregational participation when done properly. Participation stems from worshiper identification with the minister. Identification seems to be colored by sympathy in that the congregation either feels for the minister, asks the Holy Spirit to assist him, or feel that it is their duty to help in the making of a great message.

#### D. Inspiration through Intoned Preaching

Needless to say, shouters prefer sermons that are inspirational. Ministers who preach "with fire in their sermons and from the soul" appear as if they are experiencing great amounts of excitement and their inspiration spills over into the congregation. In short, inspirational sermons are preferred since an inspired minister is able to transmit feelings and emotions from the pulpit to potential shouters. The continual absence of these types of

sermons may in effect cause individual shouters to question the link between the minister and the Holy Spirit. When ministers appear to be lecturing and not "preachin'," shouters are unhappy with his performance and may therefore change their place of worship. Such was the case with Sister Nelson.

I quit going to St. Paul cause I don't like the preacher. He's alright I guess but he talks sometimes instead of preaching like he's suppose to. Now I go to Rev. Timmins' church. That man can preach! Sometimes he gets so carried away he screams like James Brown. I wait to see him run out into the aisles and dance around the church. Them sanctified preachers is filled with the Holy Ghos', they can't help dancing a little taste!

Intonation, a technique whereby the message is delivered with a rhythmic cadence, is the most effective strategy for the communication of inspiration. The minister preaches at a pace which comes closer to singing than to the normal flow of speech. The strategy suggests that the minister is himself reaching new spiritual heights as a result of being in contact with the Holy Spirit. Intonation is the minister's counterpart to 'getting happy.

Preachin' is serious business. It ain't nothin' to play with. It can get you in trouble playin' with the Holy Spirit. When I was a young man down in Louisiana, my mother said, Green, "don't never play with the Holy Gho'."

Some ministers who ain't God-sent is playin' with a dangerous thang. But I

remember what that old lady told me years ago.

When you see Green up in this pulpit preachin' and gettin' all excited I ain't playin'. Its the Holy Ghos at work . . . I am just a servant . . . all I can do is what the Holy Spirit tells me to do.

When you see me do this funny preachin', like my little grandson says, like em singing to myself with my eyes shut, I ain't playin'. That's the Holy Ghos'. Just cause you call me reverend and I have church up here behind the pulpit instead of down there don't mean nothin'. I get happy up here too! And when I get goin' I likes to preach! I mean I likes to preach!

Usually, through intonation, the minister is able to hold the attention of certain worshipers while his message increases in intensity. The call and response between minister and attentive worshipers likewise escalates in intensity until ecstasy results. The process is again one in which a sympathetic identification develops. That is, a few shouters place themselves in the hands of the minister as they concentrate on what is being said. These shouters become one with the minister so that as he builds toward a climax they too are taken along. Shouters accompany the minister step by step all the while internalizing the rhythmic cadence of his intoned preaching.

Data regarding the above was hard to come by since the majority of respondents who had experienced possession were unable to recall completely what took place during the

event. Most were able to recall the beginning and the end but not what took place in between. Sister Tucker was able to partially reconstruct her experience perhaps as well as most.<sup>9</sup>

The first time I got the Holy Ghos', oh, I guess I was about eighteen years old. I had always saw folks faintin' and goin' on but I was young and thought they was play actin' I guess. Anyway, I was too fast in them days to know anything. I was chasin pants legs [boys, this is the meaning of fast] then. Grown folks used to tell me you had to want to get the spirit. I didn't know what they meant, I just would go to church and hope it would happen to me one day. But it never did.

The Sunday after my mother passed, I felt like I wanted to die. It hurt me so bad till I didn't know what to do. My auntie told me to go to God for help. So that Sunday morning there I go . . . off to church. The minister started preachin' and I listened to em. Everytime he would talk about heaven I thought about momma. He got to goin' good and then he got to saying somethin about "one of these ole days I am gon meet my mother." Now I remember what it was . . . "one of these ole days I gon meet my mother, I know where mother is and she gon save a place for me." I got to listenin' to him and the next thang I knowed . . . the ushers was standin' up over me with they fans.

Data indicate that through sympathetic identification, shouters become almost totally dependent on the

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<sup>9</sup>The researcher found that, information on the actual state of possession was better collected in an indirect manner. That is, as the topic arose through the course of natural conversations.

minister, and his rhythmic cadence for the expression of their feelings. Their identification with what the minister is saying, and how he says it, is suggestive and serves as a verbal stimuli. In Sister Tucker's case, dependency came about as the result of her attempt to "get the spirit" and the mentioning of her mother led to her ecstatic behavior.

The dependency of shouters on the minister is best depicted in the sociological literature in the work of Alexander Alland.<sup>10</sup> Alland views the dependency in terms of a "hypnotic state." The minister, like a hypnotist, tries to establish a special relationship between himself and the subject; the outcome of which is a sensory dependency of the shouter on the minister.<sup>11</sup> As the personality of the minister is imposed on the shouter, he or she trades a state of self-control for a dependency relationship. The individual must open themselves up to establish this relationship, or in the terminology used by Alland and his research subjects, they must be "seeking."

We are of the opinion that "sensory dependency" reaches its zenith when the minister nears the point of climax and shifts to an "I" position while continuing his

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<sup>10</sup>See, Alexander Alland, Jr., "Possession in a Revivalistic Negro Church," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, I (April, 1962).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

intonation.

Early one Sunday morning I, I, I, saw  
 Jesus. I met the savior and he filled  
 me with the Holy Ghos'. I know I got to  
 leave this world someday. But I ain't  
 worried cause I, I, I, got Jesus on my  
 side. I, I, I, been to the mountain and  
 I, I, I, can see Jesus right now. I don't  
 have to worry cause I see him comin' right  
 now. I, I, I, love the lord and I am  
 gonna shout and tell everybody that Jesus  
 is my saviour! Oh! Lord! Oh, Lord! I feel  
 him in my body right now! I feel like I  
 want to move a little bit! My legs is  
 beginnin' to tremble! Ohhh, Lord!! I got to  
 get up and move around, I can't sit no  
 longer!!

We have no concrete data regarding the effects  
 produced by the shift. But we have inferred, from state-  
 ments by shouters (for example, Sister Tucker's claim that  
 she was influenced by the statement "I am gon meet my  
 mother"), and from behavior taking place during the shift,  
 that there is a possible relationship between the minister's  
 movement to the "I" position and emotional responses.

There is also some discrepancy as to whether or not  
 emotional responses should be attributed more to the  
 repetitive mentioning of suggestive phrases than to the "I"  
 position. We speculate that the most effective technique  
 combines both. Stated differently, falling out and/or  
 getting happy occur at different points in the sermon but  
 are most likely to the place as the minister shifts to an  
 "I" position which is accompanied by the repetitive

emphasis on certain phrases. For example:

I know I am gon see Jesus when my time is  
up. Yall didn't hear me.! I said . . .  
I, I, I, I am gon see Jesus in the mid-  
night hour! I know, I know, I got to die!  
When I go staggerin' in the dyin' room  
with my dyin' clothes on, meet me Jesus!  
Meet me in the dyin' hour lord! Meet me!!  
Meet me!! Met me!!

The impact of repeat phrases (meet me!), when combined with the physical gestures of the minister, are quite noticeable. As he repeats each phrase, he shakes the pulpit, pounds on it in a thunderous fashion, or grabs a hold of it and rocks backwards on his heels amid the loud call and responses from the congregation. Some respond in the same manner as the minister with, "Meet me lord, oh! Meet me lord!" Others join in with, "yes, Lord," "oh, my, my," "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus,!" or whatever response seems to fit the occasion.

The most profound effect ordinarily comes toward the end of the last phrase. When the minister suddenly stops -- intense emotional responses follow from shouters. They have been moving from phrase to phrase with him and as he screams out the last one they expect yet another, and even more intense in nature. Their anticipation is spoiled as he comes to an abrupt and unexpected halt. The result, the dependency is suddenly severed.

Much of the discussion of sensory dependency falls

into the theoretical realm. Although unable to amass hard and fast empirical data on the many psychological factors behind the phenomena, we were able to socially observe that: when the minister stops abruptly, after shifting to an "I" position and repetitively using suggestive phrases during intoned preaching, the audience carries on the performance through shouting.

### Strategies Involving Music

The importance of music to shouters has already been mentioned. However, prior references were in connection with music as a means of attaining a catharsis while praising the deity. In the absence of music, certain strategies are used to "get em involved and keep em stirred up." Mainly under conditions of an unresponsive audience or an inexperienced preacher are such strategies brought into play. Creating an involved state among shouters, in the absence of music, is achieved primarily in four ways: using musical instruments as surrogate shouters, lining out, singing the sermon, and altar-call.

#### A. Musical Instruments as Surrogate Shouters

When the audience is quiet, motionless, observing instead of participating and therefore not contributing responses when "called," organs and pianos are manipulated



to enhance the performance. In addition, the presence of an inexperienced minister in the pulpit also brings the technique into practice. The musician is then cast in a conditioned and patterned role of tactician. As a tactician, his or her behavior is not spontaneous but is well planned and thought out.

Musicians, like ministers, are adept at reading the mood of the congregation. In some instances they are directed to their instruments by way of hand signals and cues given from the pulpit; verbally the minister will mention the title of a song which fits in with his message or he may simply nod or wave his hand. When the minister "calls" or emits a clever phrase and no one responds, musical instruments fill the void created by a non-responsive audience. The instruments, in many ways, become integral members of the congregation, they become surrogate shouters. Hence, the organ, piano, or drums become part of the minister's rhythmic cadence and adds to the flow of the sermon.

Brother Sloan, who accompanies the church musicians on a set of drums located between the organ and piano, is occasionally cast in the role of tactician. He commented on his involvement by saying:

I been around preachers for a long time.  
I learned how to play these things in a  
little church in Camden, Arkansas. All

you got to do is play along with the musician; and Sister Wright's pretty good. Sometimes you have to give ministers a hand. You can tell when they need you, they get this look about em. Once and a while he'll signal to Sister Wright and I just follow her. Sometimes a little racket (noise) helps the service. These instruments can talk to ya ya know. You can hear em if you listen right.

Coordination is a prerequisite in situation where the minister communicates verbal cues to the musicians and then continues his rhythmic preaching while the musician, moves to her instrument, anticipates the rhythmic flow of the sermon, and then picks up the performance at the appropriate interval. For example, a sermon entitled "A Life After Death" was supplemented by the song, "I Got Heaven On My Mind" and as a result of the musicians' quick thinking the performance flowed smoothly, and without the mood being destroyed as the center of action shifted from minister to musician.

The researcher has witnessed instances in which musicians either misread cues from the minister or have intervened when he appeared to be in need of assistance but was not. When such errors have occurred, the minister has taken two courses of action. Musicians are merely waved off with the hands or he will verbally request them to, "hold the music and let God and the Holy Spirit do their work."

The younger less experienced ministers were found to wave off the musicians less frequently than their veteran counterparts. Younger ministers who, for the most part, have not yet mastered the art of "get em involved and stirrin' em up" are more in need of the support rendered by surrogate shouters. The young novice, instead of declining help, is more likely to go the other route by telling musicians -- "I can't do it by myself, yall got to help me now, you know I need you."

The call for help is frequently heard from ministers and we do not wish to foster the misconception that only younger ministers need help in working up potential shouters. There are many circumstances in which older and more experienced clergymen need assistance. The difference between the novice and the more experienced pastor is that the former is likely to solicit help in a verbal manner; whereas, his counterpart goes about it in a more strategic manner. The experienced pastor skillfully guides the congregation toward involvement by either lining out or singing the sermon.

#### B. Lining Out

Musical strategies are also used in conjunction with sermons when the worship service lacks both professional musicians and choirs. Lining out is one such

strategy. It is a dialogue, of the call and response variety, between the minister and the congregation. The minister first chants a verse by singing in a monotone voice with strongly marked rhythmic stresses on key words. The verse is then repeated by the congregation in a low, prolonged, grief-filled sound referred to as a "moan." Finally, both the minister and the congregation improvisationally sing together.

Pastor: I \_\_\_\_\_ love the lord,, he \_\_\_\_\_  
heard my cry \_\_\_\_\_.

Congregation: moans the same verse and again  
with rhythmic stresses on I, he,  
and cry.

Pastor and Congregation together: I \_\_\_\_\_ love  
the lord, He \_\_\_\_\_ heard my cry \_\_\_\_\_.

Pastor: He \_\_\_\_\_ is a shepherd \_\_\_\_\_  
among the sheep \_\_\_\_\_.

Congregation - moans the same verse and again  
with rhythmic stresses on He, shepherd,  
and sheep.

Pastor and Congregation together: He \_\_\_\_\_ is  
a shepherd \_\_\_\_\_ among the  
sheep \_\_\_\_\_.

Lining out should not be confused with the practice of responsive reading. Responsive readings disallow improvisation since they are read from a printed-out sheet. On the other hand, lining out permits a great deal of flexibility in verse composition. Although the minister initiates the process with a verse, there is no standard

way for it to be either sung or moaned. So what results are many individual styles. One is free to sing or moan the way he or she feels.

Out of the mixture of individualism and improvisation comes a finished product which is aesthetically pleasing to the ear. In the words of musicologist Marshall Stearns, "in the process of lining out, the various members sing in an improvisational style and at the same time they overlap to create harmony."<sup>12</sup> Stearns also comments on the historical roots of the practice. For those with an interest in the history of Black Music, he historically links lining out to the West African musical tradition; one that is grounded on the existence of many rhythms in a single song (i.e., jazz is such an art form).<sup>13</sup>

The minister tries to instill in worshipers the notion that, moaning is a means of communicating with the Holy Spirit on a personal level. So personal is the communication that only "God" knows what one is thinking because "the devil don't know what you're sayin." Our records of observations affords us no data on the congregations' acceptance or rejection of the minister's definition,

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<sup>12</sup>Marshall Stearns, The Story of Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

but it does show the functional value of moaning. For shouters, singing and moaning in a collective fashion, the solemnness engendered by the methodical rhythmic cadence, and the occasional opportunity to offer up a verse is conducive to audience-centered worshiping.

Lining out, in the absence of musical groups and instruments, provides shouters with a temporary catharsis; to them, moaning is looked upon as being "soothing to the soul." Sister Blan's comments show why such a definition has been formulated.

Ain't no harm in moanin' a little bit.  
When I moan I moans the way I feel. When  
you feels down and out, moanin' can lift  
up a hung down head. It's kinda like a  
balm for a tired soul.

### C. Singing the Sermon

Singing the sermon parallels the process of lining out, with the aim again being to get the congregation involved and stirred up in the absence of music. On the whole, the congregation usually sings very little. Normally, there is a heavy reliance on musical groups with the main source of audience participation being hand clapping, foot tapping, and frequent call and responses.<sup>14</sup> Singing

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Talley, in a publication entitled Negro Folk Rhymes, suggest that foot tapping is a substitute for the drum beats of native Africa. There being no drums in

the sermon, like lining out, is used when the ministers' dramatic performance fails to activate shouters. Being unable to facilitate adequately the attainment of their ends, he strategically shifts gears and makes use of the entire congregation by maneuvering them into a song.

Singing the sermon consists of using the words of a familiar congregational hymn as a text from which to preach. The minister begins by singing one line of the song, the congregation repeats the line in a sung response, and then the minister makes homilistic comments on the content of that line; the process is repeated until the song is finished.

The Minister sings: That old ship of zion get  
on board, there ain't no  
danger on board.

Congregational Response: That old ship of zion  
get on board, there ain't  
no danger on board.

Comment by Minister: I read in the paper the  
other day that six boys were  
on their way to a party.  
But they didn't make it  
because their car crashed  
into another one. You don't  
have to worry about that on  
the ship of zion cause Jesus  
is the captain.

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(Cont.) America, foot tapping was resorted to and became an institutionalized part of the church. If one examines the early Country Blues of John Lee Hooker for example, he will find that the guitar is the only instrument. Hand clapping and foot tapping are employed to provide rhythm. See, Thomas W. Talley, Negro Folk Rhymes (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922).

The chosen song is oftentimes related to the key theme of the sermon. The sermon, in the above situation, had to do with "that final journey." Sometimes, as the minister finishes his comments, worshipers are allowed to sing a line. In this fashion, the most expressive religionist is given a chance to participate. Another tactic is to call a noted singer from the audience to stir em up. It is not uncommon for this person to be a professional musician who is known for his version of a particular song.

D. "Altar-Call"

The "altar-call" is also a strategy that facilitates the shouter's end of a catharsis. It tends to occur, like lining out and singing the sermon, when music is absent. To create the desired effect, the minister calls everyone forward to the pulpit. Upon his request, ushers abandon their positions as guardians of the sanctuary and choir members file from their on-stage location and become part of the massive migration. At the foot of the pulpit, with the minister towering over them, they all kneel and become a "prayin' church." The congregation is so close in proximity to one another that their bodies share the same physical space as there is constant contact. Heat generated from the closeness produces a sturdy stream of perspiration from those nearer the center of the pack and when physical



displays begin, the conditions are exaggerated.

The minister delivers the actual prayer and the congregation accompanies him by assuming a kneeling position and engaging in patterns of call and response. The prayer is initiated in a slow, relaxed manner and then the tempo is increased.

I, uh . . . believe we need prayer. You might not agree with me but we're livin' in troubled times. So we ask you this morning . . . to bow your heads and open your hearts for prayer.

Father we come this morning because we need yō help down here. We realize that you are the power behind those who have power and you are the king of kings.

I am callin' you this morning . . . to . . . to remind you what you told me. You told me you was a good God, a merciful God. You told me you would come when I called you . . . and I callin' you this mornin'. Please Lord! Come by St. Paul. Please Lord! Touch somebody this mornin'! Reach out yō merciful hand and touch me Lord! Touch me! Oh, Lord! Touch me!! Touch me!! Touch me!! Come on in and touch me!! Touch me this morning Lord!

From everywhere come the congregation's responses of "touch me," "my God is a good God, oh yes he is" and "we need you here at St. Paul." When they reach a peak and when the minister is himself in an apparent state of frenzy, a given shouter is apt to experience possession. In the above situation, and in others as well, the minister added an additional causal agent as he reached down from the

pulpit and placed his hand on one of the worshipers. The placing of the hand does not always produce ecstatic behavior but the research has witnessed its effect often enough to believe that it bears mentioning.

Data indicate that, the intense call and response patterns, the physical closeness of worshipers to one another, and the minister's style of praying are the unique physical and mental components which make altar-call an ideal technique for producing ecstatic behavior. Sister Westbrook has never socially analyzed these elements but she has experienced their effects. Regarding her experiences, she showed a definite appreciation for altar-calls and lamented the decline in their usage.

St. Paul needs to do more prayin' together. Some folks is greedy with they prayers. Always askin God to do something for them. When a church prays together - when they get on their knees and talk to Jesus - they prayin' for everybody.

Years ago they used to do a lot of goin' to the mountain [an expression for altar-call] but seem like ministers don't call for the church to pray no more. When the church prays and pulls together you can feel folks all around you straining to talk to Jesus. If the fella next to you is serious, it makes you pick up the slack in yo prayin'. Callin' Jesus ain't no playing matter. You got to get with the preacher and the rest of the church and pull together. All of God's children at one time makes a loud noise - and I don't believe he's deaf.

Recovery of the Routine

Once shouters have, as a result of a great message, experienced ecstasy so intense that they become primary actors mechanisms are activated to return control to the minister. The task is undertaken in three ways; with ushers, with the help of musicians, or by the minister himself.

When shouters appear as if they will continue their actions over an extended period of time, the ushers physically remove them from the sanctuary. Earlier we noted that a functionalist interpretation of possession was inconsistent with this study. Since possession is beneficial in demonstrating the presence of the Holy Spirit we wish to hold fast to our opinion; mainly because the moments following ecstasy and not the event itself is the source of the momentary disruption.

The role of ushers in recovering the routine, as well as the mixed emotions of the minister, is evident in the following remarks.

I want to personally thank our usher board. They doin' a great job. But sometimes . . . I ain't criticizing now. But sometimes we need to let some of these folks with the Holy Ghos' alone. Sometimes we need to let em go.

We ain't too important that services can't wait till the Lord finishes his work. You need to carry out some of these dead ones

out of hear. You know the ones I am talkin' about. The ones that sit out there and ain't gettin' nothin' out of the service. Them's the ones that need to be carried out!

If the shouters' emotional display is a mild one, musicians may simply lead the congregation off into a song. Or, in the event that the house is broken up, the minister may go as far as to request the assistance of the musicians. He is then able to resume control at the conclusion of the final verse. The following passage is an illustration of the latter technique.

We thank Rev. Baskin for his prayer. I am tellin' you, he brought the Holy Ghos' in with that one. He got everybody so worked up till I don't know if I need to preach this mornin'. I oughta just go back home.

At this time, we gon ask Sister Wright to play something to settle us all down. Then I want to have a talk with you. Right now, ain't nothin' I can say that would interest you. Sister Wright, if you would.

Periodically, instead of relying on others, the minister will guide the congregation in a song himself and the musicians follow suit. Or, he will merely put his verbal skills into practice to assume control.

Y'all don't need me this morning, the Spirit is already here! You just witnessed a true gospel singer! Ain't no need in me standin' up here and tellin' you that. You saw em shoutin' just like I did.

If I could preach the way this man sings . . .  
huh, you couldn't tell me nothin' [the  
congregation laughs and someone shouts,

"I hear you, I hear you"]. I believe I'd be so stuck-up till I wouldn't even speak to the president [the audience laughs again and someone else shouts, "go a head Green!"].

I'd be a, what they call em? A singin' fool . . . a superstar [laughter]. But I wouldn't forget who gave me a voice to sing. I wouldn't forget that God parts my lips and makes my tongue move. Some of us forgets the source of all our blessings just cause we got success. Success ain't everything. Success without God . . . is like the same ole body in a new night-gown [laughter]. Today I want to briefly talk to you about . . . The Failure of Success [little of his sermon].

The transition period following instances of possession was characterized by a joking manner but became more serious as the minister moved toward the delivery of the message. By relying on his verbal artistry he acknowledged the talents of the gospel singer, instantaneously joked about the impact of his performance, and took charge of the audience.

The existence of control mechanisms signifies that, shouters are permitted to seek certain ends and are even assisted in doing so. However, when their ends are achieved in the fullest sense (ecstasy), they are not allowed to disrupt the goal seeking processes of other sub-groups.

Dependency of Shouters on the  
Environmental Sectors

Our concern here is the relatedness of the ends-means of shouters to the church's environmental sectors. The purpose of examining this relatedness is to focus on one key question -- to what extent are the mechanisms, through which the church contributes to the realization of the goals of shouters, dependent on the church's environment? An adequate answer can only be arrived at by systematically examining the impact of each environmental sector on the means-ends of the shouters.

A. Other Religious Bodies

St. Paul has established a somewhat sophisticated network of relationships with other religious bodies and organizational forms. Fellowship, which is the expressed purpose of these relationships, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V. Our interest at present is whether the church is dependent on other religious bodies in its efforts to provide mechanisms that will allow shouters to seek out and eventually attain a catharsis.

By and large, St. Paul's relation to other religious bodies is maintained for purposes other than to facilitate the means-ends of shouters. For the means-ends of shouters are either realizable through internal mechanisms built into

the church, by establishing relations with other environmental sectors, and through traits which constitute an individual shouter's personality. However, despite the high degree of autonomy, St. Paul's participation in joint worship services with other religious organizations does serve the function of enhancing the attainment of a catharsis.

Coming together with other religious bodies, "to have a good time," has the essentials of an occasion. Shouters, when journeying away from home, leave St. Paul with the intent of joining their religious counterparts for a good time. The idea of a good time is enhanced since the event will include not only St. Paul but a collection of other churches. To be sure, St. Paul has within its church structure the mechanisms necessary for a catharsis, but joint worship events provide an increased possibility of hearing a stirring gospel sermon.

Since more than one minister is present and is given some chance at performing, individual shouters are exposed to a variety of styles; some of which may be as effective as their ministers'. The larger congregation increases the scale of interaction. That is, shouters are able to make "a joyful noise" with the excitement and enthusiasm which accompanies membership in a large crowd. Musical groups also increase in number, and the subtle rivalries between

them ends in a contest. Music as a means, in many ways, becomes strengthened through joint worship efforts.

The process of visiting and hosting means something different to the emotionalist -- a good time in an away from home atmosphere. It functions to supplement or exaggerate the conditions necessary for the achievement of a catharsis.

#### B. The Black Community

As we discuss a different environmental sector our approach remains the same but the question changes slightly. It now becomes one of determining St. Paul's dependency on the black community in its efforts to provide goal attaining mechanisms for shouters. The church must look to the black community to acquire an important link in the shouter's quest for a catharsis. This link is, of course, the professional musicians. Musicians occupy a marginal status in the church setting. They, after a while, are recognized as "St. Paul's own" sister or brother so and so. There still is, however, the stigma attached to being a professional.

In their professional capacity, they can be found playing in community night spots through the week and in church on Sundays. Though a musician may have membership in a church, he or she is in most cases affiliated with a local union. The Omaha Quartet Union is comprised of local black musicians and in many respects keeps a professional



flavor in musician-church relationships.

The church, needless to say, draws its clientele from the black community. Without a church population taken from the community, it is obvious that choirs could not be founded and the efforts at collective worshipping would be difficult.

Just as important as the drafting of key clientele is the significance of living conditions for the goals and means of shouters. The black community abounds with life conditions which make a catharsis necessary. Shouters are no different from many who reside in North Omaha, they are subjected to political, social, and economic conditions which shape their lives.

Living under the constant pressures of inequality is enough to make more than a few individuals take their troubles to church. When these troubles are taken to church, the strategies used to facilitate the attainment of the end state may be shaped by those same life conditions. For example, the strategies of common life messages and providing inspiration through intoned preaching have to do with living conditions found in the black community. In conclusion, the existence of hostile living conditions adds to the need to seek out and have a "good time," as well as to the church's need to provide suitable mechanisms to satisfy the desires of a certain type of worshiper.

### C. The Metro Environment

The goals of shouters are realizable without any empirical relationship between the church and the greater metropolitan area. Although, the church contains all the necessary mechanisms or has supplemented already existing ones through relations with other environmental sectors, the metro environment has a definite impact. Much of its influence is hidden from public view but is nonetheless an important factor.

The living conditions found in the black community, which shape shouter goals and in turn have some effect on strategies, can be traced to the metro environment. Much of the content of gospel songs, common life messages, and rousing sermons attest to this fact. All in all, the metro environment has very little to do with providing the mechanisms for a catharsis but it has a lot to do with why shouters shout.

In sum, relations with the three environmental sectors provides some mechanisms and enhances the ones already found in the church. For the most part though, the mechanisms which make shouter goals realizable are found in the church and are therefore independent from environmental sectors. What we are saying is that catharsis is an individual achievement and the mechanisms which are sufficient for its attainment lie within the individual

(his willingness to open up) and the group (collective participation). It can also be readily seen that the strategies employed to facilitate the means-ends of shouters are almost wholly internalized into the church structure.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ACTION SEEKERS

#### Non-Religious Goals in a Sacred Setting

On the whole, action seekers are the most marginal constituency within the setting. Their marginality places them and their interpretation of religious activities closer to street people than to membership in the religious world of St. Paul. They are among the most youthful of setting participants and draw their representatives from both sexes. The nature of their goals is such that they hold no status positions in the social world of the church. For them, attendance at church events is a matter of either seeing, or being seen. Before proceeding further, we would like to clarify the two action-oriented verbs of seeing and being seen.

What do action seekers come to? First of all, it must be kept in mind that their attendance is spurred by the age-old condition of "nothing else to do." Ray-boy is typical of those who use the church to break the monotony of their routine round of affairs. While standing on a street corner, aggressively addressing neighborhood acquaintances, and thus passing time; he had this to say

about his church involvement.

I guess I am just tired of the same ole thing. The same old street life. I need a change of pace. This pace is kickin' my ass. It's the same ole, same ole.

Many, like Charles, come looking for interested members of the opposite sex.

Man, there's some fine bitches at these churches. They thick as flies at Salem Baptist! By ones -- little ones -- pretty ones -- ugly ones. You name it! all sizes and colors.

Others are more interested in the quality of music to be found in the church setting. To Maurice, and no doubt others as well, church musicians and choirs have a certain drawing power.

Shit! I gotta have music. I gotta have some sounds. A lot of these nigga's think I am crazy cause I go to church. Fuck all that preachin' and shit, I be trippin' off the music. The organist gets jazzy once and a while and even them old sisters get to rockin' a little bit. If it wasn't in church, a lot a them sisters would probably get up and shake they ass . . . I'd be right with em too!

The church as a sexual playground and the musical forms being expressed within it are responsible for capturing the attention of action seekers. They are important factors but are not the only reasons for church participation. For a significant number of action seekers frequently attend worship events to check the validity of religion and to satisfy their curiosity about the minister.

It looks kinda funny to see all those people on they knees prayin' like that. I wonder if they believe that shit? When I was little . . . my mother tried to get me to do it too. This preacher used to always bother her about me goin' to church. I ain't gon lie now . . . I almost believed it till I got hip. Yeah, I used to take my pennies to church every Sunday and give em to the preacher. Now I just lay back and watch him deal. Sometimes he sounds for real and sometimes you know what he's after. I know one thing though . . . he couldn't get in these hear pockets with a crowbar.

Ed Lee, in the preceding statement, touches upon the curiosity which brings a sizable number of action seeker into the church setting. They are not believers themselves but the actions of those who are is enough to stir their interest. If one were to conceptualize the action seekers' reason for attendance, the word would be entertainment.

We also noted that action seekers were interested in being seen. It is not unusual for one to "get cleaner than a mutha-fucka" and then attend church. Being clean means that, one will be in the public eye and will thus have an opportunity to attract the attention of the opposite sex or establish a pattern which results in the receiving of a certain degree of status. Although the aims of action seekers are of a non-religious nature, they are able to fit into the worship service without drastically altering the attainment of religious ends by others.

As seen through the eyes of the devoutly religious, action seekers occupy a position somewhere between visitors and backsliders.<sup>1</sup> That is, they attend church on a sporadic basis and seldom make overt statements regarding their religiosity. Action (seeker), rather than making verbal comments themselves, are more interested in what is being said by others. Their concern is in finding out who the visitors are, what their general appearance is, and what they say as they address the congregation.

Some action seekers, even though raised in the church, have fallen away since they have failed to take communion in three months. For these individuals, the church was a previous source of enjoyment but is now something to be questioned. The doubts have predisposed them toward church attendance for purposes of seeking out action instead of a "church-home." This shift in attitudes is illustrated by Lucy's comments on her childhood.

I was brought up to respect the church.  
Down home, wasn't nothin' to do but eat,  
sleep . . . and work. My whole family  
went to church and my mother and father  
used to say it was our home away from  
home. I guess I've changed a lot though  
. . . it don't mean what it used to. I  
still go once and a while . . . to see  
what's happening. If I ain't doing  
nothin' special, I can always go and

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VII for a fuller discussion of role definition as it pertains to church membership.

enjoy the choir and see the preacher  
do his thang.

Because the idea of a church home carries little weight, action seekers are free to attend a variety of churches in a variety of denominations, or, action may be sought in non-sacred settings.

Action seekers have as a goal the achievement of a release from the grinds of everyday living. Their goal differs from the catharsis sought by shouters in that it is devoid of religious connotations, they attend church to enjoy the performance not to be a part of it. In the following paragraphs we will examine elements of the worship service which have been re-interpreted so as to provide entertainment.

#### The Action Seeker's Interpretation of "Shoutin'"

Action seekers can be described as a spin-off from the shouters. Stated differently, one of the main sources of attraction for action seekers are the shouters. The phenomenon of falling out is responsible for bringing a meaningful number of action seekers into the church. They conceive of ecstasy as "them ole sisters gettin' off on that music" and not the Holy Spirit entering their bodies.

Falling out is held in higher esteem than the act of getting happy; mainly because the former results in



greater physical activity. The greater the amount of physical activity, the more likely it is that the house will be broken up. A broken up house, while contributing to the goals of shouters, is also relished by non-involved onlookers whose aim is to seek out differing forms of entertainment. In situations where possession does not occur action seekers are likely to describe the worship event as "boring," "dead," or as "another tired ass church service." The repeated absence of possession or a decline in the amount of physical fervor is reason enough to seek action elsewhere. Such was the case when one of the Bland sisters abruptly terminated her visitations at St. Paul. Her rationale for doing so was stated thusly:

I like to go where the action is. They be jamin' at Faith Temple. That's where the action is. They have a better band at Faith Temple; them folks be dancin' and carryin' on.

Nowhere in the statement is there any mention of religion (i.e., the respondent has even gone beyond denominational boundaries since the church receiving her praise belongs to the holiness denomination). We feel this to be significant in that action seekers, although finding entertainment in Baptist denominations, hold certain denominations up as models of action. These denominations provide more entertainment since people not only shout but dance as well.

Attendance at sanctified churches is an alternative because, "they get down harder." Getting down parallels the phenomenon of having a good time, the difference being that shouters have a good time in the name of the lord, whereas, action seekers attach no such meaning to their behavior. The fact that seeing others participate wholeheartedly can be a source of entertainment is substantiated by excerpts from conversations pertaining to church attendance. Lucy commented in the following way:

I kinda think them folks get carried away with the music. I like to watch em get happy. One woman lost her wig when she fell out (she laughs) . . . didn't she Nick! I liked to fell out watchin' that cow (in this situation the respondent uses the phrase "I liked to fell out" to refer to a state of laughter and not spiritual possession).

Mary Ann, another respondent, offered a similar interpretation of seeing others involved and participating in their religion.

I go to church cause ain't nothin' else to do. I love to see em get down on Sunday mornin'. I was high once and almost got the Holy Ghos' listenin' to that music. Shoot . . . the preacher acts like he gets high himself. Ain't nothin' wrong with it . . . they tell me Jesus drank a little wine himself.

The statement hints at the drawing power that music has in bringing action seekers into the church. A further description of music can be found in a later discussion of strategies. It is sufficient at this point to simply say that,

action seekers are more interested in the rhythmic cadence of church music than in the meanings symbolized by the lyrics.

### Action Seekers and the Minister

Action seekers are also attracted by the talents of various ministers. Here too they re-interpret the religious content of the sermon. Like the shouters, they appreciate "a great message." The difference is that action seekers are not interested in the relationship between a great message and the coming of the Holy Spirit. To them, it's not what the minister says that's so important. What's important is how he says it. Harry touched upon the appreciation for oratory skills while addressing a small group of fellow church goers.

Rev. Green he preaches every Sunday. They got some bad speakers on the inside. They kicks ass when you're high. Reverend Green talks plenty of shit for a preacher.<sup>2</sup>

Action seekers tend to be interested in the assortment of techniques the minister employs as he interacts with congregational members. Rev. Green is then viewed as a

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<sup>2</sup>Talking plenty of shit refers to the ability of an individual to hold the tension span of a group of thus provide subtle entertainment. For an elaborate discussion of the art see Chapter VII and the section entitled "Parallel Forms of Social Behavior."

strategist rather than as a messenger of God. His performance is seen as an attempt to create certain moods within the congregation, all of which are aimed at increasing monetary contributions, contributions to be used by himself instead of for church business. Negative interpretations of the minister's economic standing varies from mild joking to more serious acquisitions that resemble the gut-level description offered by Brown.<sup>3</sup>

You know that silver hog (cadillac) that's always parked outside the church? That's Reverend Green's shit. I see him ridin' down the duce (24th street) . . . cleaner than a white fish! You know you can't get much cleaner than a white fish! That slick mutha-fucka is hustlin' his ass off!

Action seekers conceive of the church as a business which is engaged in selling religion. Perhaps the word business is a little misleading for it suggests of honesty. A more descriptive term would be the concept of "hustle." A "hustle" is a way of making a living without adhering to the traditional American work ethic. In short, it involves activities that demand exploitation of those who have the goods or articles being sought. While viewing the church as a hustle, action seekers believe that it borders

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<sup>3</sup>These views of the minister create doubts about the validity of the church and the religious callings of men who profess to be "God-sent." Most negative images have to do with the ownership and display of various types of material articles (i.e., houses, clothes, cars, etc.).

on dishonesty but are willing to accept the credo of the street corner (i.e., "ain't nothin wrong with it till you get caught in your shit.").

Such a view of the church separates action seekers from the rest of the church population in that they draw a bit of pride from "being hip to the situation" or from knowing "what's goin' down." We have classified these attitudes under the heading of negative responses. However, a closer examination reveals that the views of the minister held by action seekers is dialectic in nature. On the one hand is the criticism of religion and the church as a "hustle;" conversely they express admiration for the ways in which the church and the minister have succeeded in putting together an organization. The admiration stems from the fact that individual ministers and churches are relatively successful in a world which is antagonistic to the success of the black man. As one respondent put it, "the church and them slick-ass ministers is gettin' over, gettin over like a fat rat."

Action seekers are in search of entertainment and while doing so they do more observing than participating. They constitute the audience which shows up every Sunday morning to either see or be seen. Their presence is known to others in the setting but the worship service continues in spite of it. Even though Rev. Green acknowledges that a

portion of the audience comes "to look pretty" and to "look for mistakes so they can go back and tell it," his presentation of self nevertheless facilitates the means-ends of action seekers.

Strategies: Facilitating the  
Means of the Action Seekers

A. Anecdotes on Black Life

The permissiveness of the audience alluded to earlier is possibly the most important binding force between the minister and action seekers. To action seekers, the minister is cast in the role of an entertainer; he is expected to verbalize about matters which don't necessarily pertain to religious phenomena. Included in these matters are frequent reflections on social aspects of black life. The most appealing non-religious discussions are anecdotes on "you know how nigga's are." These anecdotes are presented to the congregation so that those who are receiving and enjoying them have little idea that the minister is standing behind a pulpit and not performing on a stage.

We colored folks like to be coordinated!  
I was delivering a sermon in Detroit and  
this cat comes in dressed like super-fly.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Super-fly is a creation by the American motion picture industry. The character is occupationally classified as a "dope pusher." One of his major features is his

He was decked out in green on green in green, with a big white hat. This cat was sharp as a tack. One of the ushers asked him to remove his hat so folks in the back could see. You know . . . the nigga wanted to fight about that thang on his head (laughter). Talkin' bout he wouldn't be coordinated if he took off his front. Yeah . . . we as a people love to be coordinated. First thing we do when we get our hands on a little money is buy what we calls a hog. I am not talkin' bout stockyards but what we call a cadillac. With gangster walls, a diamond roof top, and a couch and a T.V. in the middle of the seat. I don't have to go no further . . . you know how niggas are (congregation laughs and responds with "go head, preacht it," "tell it like it is," and I hear yeah).

Clearly the content of anecdotes (such as the above) has very little to do with religion. What it does have to do with is a slice of life to be found in the black community. More specifically, a slice of life which partially constitutes the street corners that many action seekers tend to frequent. Therefore it is an anecdote that action seekers are readily able to identify with.<sup>5</sup> What he has done in this particular situation is briefly described a cultural element that cuts across the lives of all black folks. But,

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(Cont.) props which includes a wide array of clothing, a new Cadillac, and a hairdo which has become known as a "fly" (i.e., in earlier days it was referred to as a "process").

<sup>5</sup>We are not suggesting that others are not able to identify with the anecdote but that descriptions of certain slices of life are more appealing to the young action seekers. Anecdotes such as the above are parallel by the strategy of "common life messages" employed by shouters.

his specific goal is to describe what the church as a whole considers to be inappropriate behavior. The character being depicted is the black "pimp." Since action seekers are closest to street people in attitudes and outlook, they do not consider the behavior to be inappropriate but are entertained by the characterization of an action-oriented life style. However, the minister knows that many of the existing attributes of community actors "ain't good for the children" and it is the job of the church to "help raise" the youth of the community. So, the strategy is to entertain action seekers by presenting anecdotes.

The anecdotes usually have as a subject matter traits which action seekers define as positive. The minister then presents these traits in an entertaining and seemingly approving manner in order to capture the audiences' attention. After doing so, he then proceeds with a religious re-interpretation.

We . . . have abused the word home, especially the male sex. Not by being coordinated, but using our brothers and sisters to be coordinated. By pushing women out to stand in welfare lines, better known as ADC lines. We males have misused the word home. The child is neglected, the money to buy him a pair of shoes is taken and spent on cars and clothes. And folks have the nerve to tell me we don't need God in our homes.

Although the pastor sets his audience up in this fashion, there is little hostility among the action seekers,



Mainly because the anecdotes that precede the re-interpretations are well done entertainment pieces characterized by an abundance of physical gestures and a stylized verbal presentation. Another reason for the relative absence of hostility is because the anecdotes are true in their content. There seems to be a certain delight among action seekers when a minister ceases to talk "that religious bullshit" and deals with "what's happening." It's not often that a minister is able to bridge the gap between the church and the action-oriented world of the street corners. But when one does, listening to a clergyman that knows "what's happening" is in itself a source of entertainment. Perhaps much of the appeal stems from the bewilderment expressed in the often heard exclamation, "Damn! I wonder how he knows?"

For the deeply religious, the re-interpretation of anecdotes is a denial of that which is sinful since it is an open declaration of what is right and what is wrong. For action seekers, again we find that it's not always the statement of right and wrong that's so important, but how it is stated. Rev. Green, while communicating to the congregation, is himself quite stylized. While talking about being coordinated he himself is engaging in a coordinated presentation of self. Action seekers thrive on his theatrical movements which include long starring glances at the congregation, pulling and tugging at his trousers and suspenders,

role playing, talking to the wall, and the use of other actors and physical props.

#### B. Role Playing

Few people can deny the expressive abilities of Rev. Green as he artistically creates and facilitates the emergence of various mood changes from his position behind the pulpit. In addition to being a pseudo-psychologist, he must above all else get his message across. To do this, he will at times do things that antagonize one sub-group but at the same moment have the opposite effect on other groups. Role playing is a case in point. While it is highly received by action seekers, it is classified as "foolishness" or "clowning" by those accustomed to receiving the message in the more standard ways.

Role playing requires that the minister make use of not only the pulpit but the entire stage area. The event is spontaneous since neither the minister or those involuntarily playing the other roles are aware of the situation beforehand. For the technique to be successful the minister must be able to read his audience with a high degree of accuracy. Imagine the following situation; the minister is in the middle of a sermon on the "powers of God." He is preaching about the relationship between two biblical characters, Sarah and Isaiah. Their goal is to have a

son. We pick up the minister's conversation as he speaks from behind the pulpit.

The bible says, that God has all powers in his hands. All power, all power in his hands. Well . . . you know a long time ago the bible said Isaiah and Sarah wanted to have a son.

As he finishes the last statement he begins to look toward the choir which is seated on the stage behind the pulpit. He moves to the choir section and while in the process he takes a seat next to a seemingly surprised young woman. He then continues . . .

Well . . . you know I wasn't there all them thousands of years ago but I imagine the conversation went somethin like this as Isaiah was rappin to Sarah.

He puts his arm around the young woman and faces her. In assuming a new position he turns his back to the congregation. This generates responses of "Go Ahead Green!" "Alright now Green!" and "Talk to her Green!" Above the responses from the audience he continues while smartly crossing his legs . . .

You know Sarah . . . it sure would be nice if we could have a son. I know it's a lot to ask . . . but my only wish in life is to have a son. I've got all the wordly riches and the only thing missin' is a son. If you give me a son, I'll give you anything in the world.

Again he changes seats as he releases the young woman's hand. This time he seats himself in an empty chair

on the other side of the lady. Now she is involuntarily forced into playing the role of Isaiah. He continues to speak but this time in the role of Sarah . . .

My only wish in life is to make you happy  
Isaiah. But I am a little old to give  
birth to a child. The matter is out of  
my hands. I don't have the power to give  
you a son. The power is in God's hands.  
I shall pray for you a son.

Finishing his last line he returns to the pulpit and continues his sermon . . .

So Sarah prayed and she prayed and she  
prayed that her old tired body might pro-  
duce a son for Isaiah, and lo and behold  
one day a son came! Isaiah became a  
believer. God has all power in his hands. . .  
God has all power in his hands. Only God  
can do the impossible!

The end of the sermon was warmly received. The outcome was that the church had become a theater for a few moments. The subject matter was indeed religious but its presentation included elements which were appealing to action seekers. The most enthusiastically received portion of the message was the minister's direct reference to the art of "rapping" (see Chapter VII) and the subsequent act of carrying out the art. Also, the prospect of selecting a person out of the congregation and ingeniously forcing them to participate in the theatrical adventure was of interest. Here again we find that the minister is able to appeal to action seekers by adding a down to earth touch to the bible.

Instead of reading a strict interpretation of the account from the bible, he increased the likelihood of reaching the unchurched by role playing and inserting such action-oriented enterprise as rapping and paraphrasing. Our record of observations lacked evidence on the effect that this particular role playing incident had on action seekers but it afforded an abundance of evidence on the reaction to role playing in general. The reaction to the strategy was best stated by Mingo as he zealously compared role playing to the standard sermon.

When the dude gets up there and puts on his glasses you know he's gonna read to yeah. I don't mind . . . but god-damn if I wanted to read the bible I'd do it at the crib (home). You know what I mean? I kinda dig it when he catches somebody off guard and bullshits a little bit. I remember once when he was fuckin around like the microphone was a nigga who owed him some money. He grabbed the thing like he was chocken it and started screamin, "nigga give me my money," "nigga give me my money." The cats crazy!

### C. Talking to the Wall

One of Rev. Green's favorite attention getters is that of talking to the wall. During the middle of a sermon he will suddenly stop, look around the room and finally involve himself in prolonged eye contact with the congregation. The result of these mannerisms is that the sanctuary becomes extremely quiet. Everyone in the congregation, especially

action seekers, tries to anticipate what will come next. He ends the silence by saying, "yall don't hear me" or "yall don't want to hear what I got to say!" Entertainment, at this point, becomes interwoven with the message of the day. After having seized the congregation's attention, he is free to get his point across by mixing religion with showmanship. A final psychological maneuver is initiated as he turns his back (with apparent disgust) to the congregation, puts his hands in his pockets, lowers his head, and slowly walks toward the wall behind the pulpit. As he reaches the wall amid loud responses from the congregation in general and rounds of laughter from action seekers, he knocks three or four times on the wall and engages it in a mythical conversation.

They don't want to listen to me this mornin wall. Well . . . (he scratches his head during the pause) the lord told me to preach this mornin and so I got to preach. Well . . . they didn't want to hear me when I said the Lord don't need them but they need the lord. (He pause for a few seconds to let the statement take affect and then continues.) I said . . . the Lord don't need them but they need the lord. Well . . . I know they didn't hear me but you heard me. Thank you.

The conclusion of his conversation is greeted with an abundance of laughter. He has not only succeeded in entertaining them but has also gotten the major theme of his sermon across (i.e., "The One need that All men share").

In addition he now has a captive audience to preach to as he slowly walks back to the pulpit. An audience that now includes the attentive ears of even those who are in the setting seeking some sort of action.

Talking to the wall and other such tactics clearly demonstrate the minister's ability to psychologically manipulate a congregation. His first psychological maneuver was to startle the audience, to catch them off guard and work them up. In short, he put a little action back in the service. Next, he carefully but sternly reprimanded the congregation after skillfully gaining their attention. And finally, the congregation was let off the hook in that the conversation with the wall provoked a humorous response. Most important of all, the congregation's attention was not lost as he returned full circle back to the art of delivering the message.

The act of talking to the wall, and the individual mannerisms accompanying it, draw out positive responses from action seekers. It keeps them involved in the worship service, with the focus of attention falling on the boldness of the minister and not the religious perspective that guides his actions. Just as an audience pays tribute to a showman, many action seekers return week after week to watch the antics taking place behind the pulpit. The spontaneity which characterizes his showmanship is best summed-up by an

unidentified lady who seemed more like a fan of the reverend than of a worshiper. She enthusiastically stated, "Rev. Green is liable to do some of anything up there, that man is somethin else child, I am tellin' ya!"

D. The Use of Other Actors and Physical Props

Theatrical performers make use of a variety of props in order to enhance the effectiveness of their performance. In the church, we find that the minister is no different in this respect. Like other polished performers, he employs whatever is available in the setting to supplement his oratory skills. When addressing the congregation he may suddenly grab a chair, place it in front of him, and personify it by carrying on a fictitious conversation. Or he may entertain a portion of the congregation by constantly using handkerchiefs to wipe away perspiration and then tossing one of the white cloths into the audience during moments of climax.

The handkerchief is retrieved by a congregation member and then tossed and re-tossed, and all the while the number of participating actors is multiplying with each respective toss. In the same vain, the pulpit becomes a useful object. The structure is utilized as if it is a magnet; a magnet which keeps the minister grounded to the earth as he pounds, screams, rocks, and reels his way through a sermon.



Besides the use of physical props, the minister is a master at including other actors in his dramatics. To be sure, these actors are temporarily put on the spot by virtue of the unexpected grilling. In the language of action seekers they are "put on front street."<sup>6</sup> The discomfort of the situation is that one does not challenge the minister, even though being put in a rather awkward position. So, actors being singled-out by the minister simply stare about the room and absorb the verbal abuse. The minister makes use of other actors for two main reasons, to demonstrate a point and to use them as an example. Action seekers derive entertainment from watching and listening as the minister skillfully maneuvers his target into a position of discomfort. They experience amusement as the actor either accepts being "fronted" or communicates his or her dislike for the situation through a series of meaningful facial expressions and other physical gestures.

Strategically making an example of an unsuspecting actor is not a premeditated event. Its occurrence is dependent on the minister's ability to recognize the need for an example to support a particular point and the chance that

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<sup>6</sup>"Front street" is a verbal game involving one actor's ability to embarrass another and thereby momentarily entertain a small circle of friends which both are usually a part of. For a detailed discussion, see Chapter VII.

such an example is present when needed. The following incident points out both variables. The minister is lecturing the congregation on the subject of supporting their church and contributing to a special fund directed toward building maintenance. He begins his address as the deacons report on the amount of money collected during offering.

We are \$25 short. Ya know the church is like a wheel barrel. A wheel barrel won't go nowhere unless you push it. I ain't never seen one with a motor yet! Maybe some of yall have but I ain't! (laughter) That's the way the church is. You got to get out front and push.

The silence of the sanctuary is broken as a lady enters the church room through a set of double doors. The noise created by her entrance attracts the attention of the congregation and they turn and face the rear of the room. As a result of the disturbance, Rev. Green has lost the attention of his audience but he quickly seizes the opportunity and incorporates it into his lecture.

Sister D. is late arriving but she's never late with her dues. She ain't no dead limb. (laughter) She comes late but she always pays on time.

With this bit of cleverness, the minister succeeded in initiating the collection of a second offering. He had done two things which made the "lifting" of the second offering more acceptable. First, he toyed with the mood

of the congregation by interjecting humor into the situation as they carefully sifted through their purses, billfolds, and pockets for change and "foldin money." Secondly, the minister was able to pressure the late arriving member into making the first donation. The first contributor is important since he or she sets the pace for a snow-balling effect.

The audience was briefly entertained as the lady unknowingly entered the room and was immediately put on the hot spot. In most situations the pastor will attempt to remove some of the pressure by inserting the phrases, "I don't mean nothin by this now Sister --," or "I don't mean no harm," before addressing the chosen actor. But in other situations, he merely leaves it up to the actor to ease the pressures on himself.

#### D. Demonstrating Points through the Use of Other Actors

Using other actors to demonstrate a point is much the same as making an example of a given actor. The primary difference is the absence of pressure on the chosen actor, mainly because all the minister needs is a visual aid. By using others to demonstrate a point, the person is not confronted but merely serves to reinforce dramatically what the minister happens to be speaking about. For example, once the minister, after delivering a rousing

sermon, declared that the church was "open" to all those who wanted to become members. Although his sermon generated a great deal of congregational response, it was apparently not effective enough to bring new recruits into the church. Not satisfied with the state of affairs, he moves from behind the pulpit and into the audience where he continues his recruitment pitch. To enhance the appeal of his invitation, he draws upon actors from the audience.

I don't care how good you live and how high you go in education you got to die. John Kennedy was a great man. Martin Luther King was a great man. But they had to die. If you don't have God in your side, you'll die alone. Will somebody come? [to join the church]

The pastor extends his arms in an outward manner to welcome anyone who wishes to come forward and join the church. He pauses for a few minutes, as the music softly plays in the background. Nobody comes forward. Still not satisfied by the response, he moves slowly to a mother seated at the front of the church and carefully lifts a baby from her lap. He then holds the infant up for everyone to see and then resumes his conversation.

Everybody has got to die! I was at the grave of a small child the other day. A small innocent child. There was a young baby lying in the grave. Whether you die young or old, you must be prepared to cross that river. The doors of the church is open!

Still no one comes forward out of the audience. The minister exhibits a look of frustration and then he abruptly changes gears as he introduces another actor into his presentation. This time it's an usher who helps him get his point across.

We heard a great message today. Look like somebody ought to come foreward. [He points at an usher in the back, catches her attention, and continues], Open that door! Open it wide! Wider! As good as this message was, a bear might walk through that door! [He then tells the usher] Look on the floor down the middle of the aisle . . . a school of ants might be marchin through if they heard this great message! Don't close 'em! Leave 'em open!

The audience responded favorably to the drastic change from a serious approach which employed the baby as an object to the humorous incident involving the usher. In the latter situation, the entire focus of the congregation was on the usher. While being used to help makes a point, she seemed perplexed as to whether or not the minister was serious in his request. Therefore she unwittingly added to the impact of the spectacle. The spontaneity of the situation, and the ability of the minister continually to keep his audience off guard, makes the worship service an entertaining event. Besides his religiosity, the minister brings to a sub-group within his church a variety of personal mannerisms and psychological tactics. All of which, whether consciously done or not, facilitate the means-ends of action

seekers. On any given Sunday morning the church contains a number of people whose goal is not to worship but to watch others "faint," "fall out," and "act a fool." They come not to be inspired by a fiery gospel sermon but to take notice of how the message is delivered. In short, to watch a showman perform.

Our discussion of the pulpit's relationship to action seekers makes it appear as if the relationship is a one way affair. The content of the past pages clearly points out that the minister facilitates the attainment of the ends chosen by action seekers. But to this point we have neglected to touch upon what the minister's intents are. For him his sermons are evangelistic. The researcher was unable to obtain data, through personal interviews, which were supportive of the evangelistic role of sermons, but the matter was indirectly discussed on several occasions during Sunday school.

I am glad to see so many of you out this mornin. Look like folks quit comin to Sunday school. We had a wonderful lesson this mornin and I would like to thank the teachers for doin such great work. I know you don't always agree with me . . . but you always continues your great work. We need more young people in our church. Not to just come and sit but to work for the lord. As Christians you ought to try and reach all our young folks. I've tried everything myself. Some of yall call it foolishness and clownin but young people need to be brought into the church . . . then they can be saved. You got to talk their language

and show 'em religion is for them. All those young folks sittin in the back of the church . . . them's the ones we should be concerned about.

If we were systematically to examine portions of sermons which action seekers responded to favorably, we would most likely find a relationship between the intensity of the responses and whether or not sermons drew parallels between life situations and the phenomena of religion. One needs only view a few titles, "Breakin up somebody's happy home," or "Gettin high on drugs and Gettin high on religion," to appreciate the minister's attempts at bringing religion down to the level of action seekers. By delivering sermons which deal with everyday action-oriented affairs, the pulpit enters into an exchange with action seekers. The exchange is based on the pulpit providing entertainment through action-oriented sermons, and the accompanying theatrics, in exchange for the presence of action seekers. The presence of action seekers is necessary if they are to be exposed to religious tenants. Those who are not supportive of the minister's showmanship, for religious or social reasons, either inwardly enjoy it or tolerate it. The fact that action seekers are not in church "to get religion" is known and accepted. Much acceptance lies in the possibility that they may "one day see God." The general opinion of the church is that "they don't have to

be in church hearing the Lord's praises, they could be in the bars or on some of these street corners."

### Music and the Action Seekers

A long time ago they didn't allow us to have those things in our church now they just come in for the music.

"Those things" refer to the incorporation of pianos, guitars, drums and other musical instruments into the worship service. The quote reflects upon the drawing power of music and its relation to a portion of the church audience. Explicit in the statement is the notion of hostility. In order for hostility to occur, there must be at least two opposing factions who have an appreciation for two different types of church music. Within St. Paul, these two factions are represented by action seekers and the sub-group designated as a "small band of believers in Christ." As for the shputers, they fall somewhere toward the middle of the two extremes. Shouters occupy a middle position in that they have an appreciation for both a jazz type of music and the near blues variety so enjoyed by the band of believers.<sup>7</sup> The jazz variety is appreciated while the near blues style

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<sup>7</sup>Here the jazz type of music includes the works of such jazz artist as organist Jimmy Smith as well as what many have called "Rhythm and Blues."



is conducive to involvement. The jazz style of music requires the use of numerous instruments and seemingly consists of one instrument playing against another. On the other hand, the near blues style of music consists of a piano which engages in patterns of call and response with the soloist and/or the choir. True to the jazz form, the jazz style of music played in the church is instrument centered; whereas, the near blues style spirituals are verbal forms of musical expression. To better develop our discussion of music as a facilitator of means-ends of action seekers, both forms of music will be analyzed. An analysis will further our understanding of why action seekers appreciate one type of music more than they do another type.

The two types of music found in the worship service are performed by two distinct musical groups; the Jr. Choir performs the jazz type and the Gospel Choir specializes in spirituals resembling a musical style which is characteristic of the blues. Given the existence of two choirs with each performing different musical styles, it is not surprising that there must be two types of audiences to be catered to. We shall call the audience types the appreciative audience and the involved audience.

### The Appreciative Audience

The appreciative audience is the category to which action seekers belong. Appreciative audiences are mainly interested in the musical performance (i.e., the ability of musicians to display their musical talents in the playing of their instruments, by singing, and through the presentation of self which accompanies the playing and singing). The behavior of an appreciative audience can be conceptualized as tranquil. There is little overt response and the lack of it permits audience members to set back and admire critically the aesthetics of the moment.

The Jr. Choir and the jazz type of music which it plays is tailor-made for an appreciative audience. Action seekers are able to set back and watch the youngsters of the Jr. Choir perform lively jazz tunes as they collectively sway back and forth to their own music making. The organ is used to accompany the younger singers who not only capture the attention of action seekers but a group of proud parents as well. During their performance, eyes and ears are also focused on the organist as she enters into a musical call and response with the young singers. All of the musical accompaniment is done on the organ and for good reason. As we mentioned earlier, jazz requires a variety of instruments. Since the music department at St. Paul is

not endowed with a large number of musicians, the organ is a do-it-all instrument. Musically, it is capable of producing a wide range of sounds and pitches. Thus it is capable of sounding like a large number of musical instruments. Also, the stops and pedals that must be adjusted and pushed on an organ make it an instrument to be appreciated instead of an instrument that is adapt at conveying feelings. The many mechanisms stand between the self and the expression of feeling. If a player feels sad, he cannot play sad because of numerous adjustments to sound mechanisms (i.e., volume - loud or soft, smooth or jerky, fast ot slow).

The youthfulness of the Jr. Choir, the nature of the organ as an appreciative rather than a feeling instrument, and a jazz style of music with the emphasis on many rhythms, makes for a musical performance that entertains the congregation in general and the action seekers in specific. Many action seekers, awaken on Sunday morning, put on their best articles of clothing, and attend church. Not because they are religious but because they "jam at St. Paul on Sunday mornin." Where else in the black community can there be found live music on Sundays and for the price of, nothing.

Following the performance of the Jr. Choir, it is not unusual to see a few action seekers make their way to the exits. Some have seen and heard what they come for and

are headed elsewhere. Others, like "king" Richard, have merely gone outside and around the corner to "twist up another number" and will return later.<sup>8</sup>

They play some nice music in church. You ought to check it out. They get down in there. Every Sunday before church, I used go to Easy Drive for a bottle of wine, smoke a number, get Good and Fucked up, and go dig on the music. You know . . . just lay back and coast awhile.

"Diggin" on the music within the confines of the church is little different from appreciating similar types of musical forms in a secular setting. For action seekers, the all important rhythm is still there. The key dissimilarity is that in church the music is accompanied by the frequent mentioning of "that Jesus bullshit."

Action seekers show little or no interest in displays of their own emotions. Yet, the involved audience holds something for them. They themselves never become a part of the involved audience but remain appreciative. In a sense, they end up appreciating the involved audience. Perhaps this will become clearer once we clarify what is meant by an involved audience. Furthermore we will better understand why they fail to make the transition from an appreciative to an involved audience.

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<sup>8</sup>A "number" is subcultural jargon for a marihuana cigarette and "twist up" is a synonym for the act of rolling by hand.

### The Involved Audience

The blues style music performed by the Gospel Choir, finds the greatest amount of acceptance among shouters and the small band of believers. The piano, rather than the organ is used to accompany these spirituals. As an instrument, the piano is more of a total sound. It resembles, somewhat, a complete orchestra in that a musician is able to play both harmony and melody. It has a delicacy of expression about it which allows the player to translate by means of the slightest gradations of tone, the subtlest of emotions.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the organ, it permits the musician to communicate feelings (happy, sad, etc.) without numerous adjustments to tonality mechanisms. The musician becomes the mechanism; this is especially true in a style of playing referred to as "gospel playing."

"Gospel playing" is what professional church musicians do to communicate their feelings or emotions to an audience. Unlike "straight playing," which is the strict adherence to sheet music, gospel playing allows the musician to improvise. The artist does not hold strictly to a written musical form as a guide. Instead, a basic outline of a given musical piece is employed and the musician permits

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<sup>9</sup>Ernest Closson, History of the Piano (London: Paul Elek Publishers, 1947), p. 10.

feeling and style to come out. Gospel playing is capsule communication, geared toward a participating audience. Musicologists have dealt with the social psychological aspects of communicating meaning through musical forms.<sup>10</sup> There is agreement that emotion and meaning can be transmitted through music. However, the difficulty is in determining whether it is the music which creates the emotional state or something inherent in the personality of the listener.

We hypothesize that meanings and emotions transmitted through songs have to do with an individual's sum total of past experiences or to experiences related to a whole group of individuals within a culture. When the musician plays a song that makes others recall past experiences, meaning is transmitted and emotional display is likely to result. For example, the minister repeatedly directs the musician to play certain songs which nearly always result in emotionalism; not just in a single instance but time after time.<sup>11</sup> Such songs are old standards and are

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<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed discussion <sup>of</sup> feelings and moods and their transmission via music see, Paul R. Fansworth, The Social Psychology of Music (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1969), or Leonard B. Meyer, Emotion and Meaning in Music (The University of Chicago Press, 1956).

<sup>11</sup>There are certain theoretical implications behind this statement. Namely, there is the possibility that over

used to arouse the congregation. A church standard is typically sung by the same soloist. A specified song becomes his or her speciality and the minister acknowledges the fact as soloists are usually drafted into performing by suggestions from the clergy. These singers are, by and large, professional musicians and are quite adept at conveying their feelings and emotions. In extreme cases, the house is broken up (i.e., congregational members rush from their seats and sometimes dart to the stage to grasp the singer or an actor may rise from his seat and take over the solo part from the original singer). For as the old standards are played the minister carefully instructs the congregation to, "listen to the words, listen to what they say."

The communication between the gospel playing (or singing) musician and the audience is possible because the musician is able to transmit feelings either through playing or through displaying their own excitement. The words of a song are related to emotionalism since they are responsible for the rekindling of prior experiences or the production of images of what is to come or what has come

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(Cont.) an extended period of time one is socialized into reacting in certain ways and the response becomes habitual and automatic. This may be especially true in the case of shouters and others who have been "raised in the church."

and gone.

I got heaven on my mind. It keeps me singing all the time. When you see me walkin', I am saying to myself, I got heaven on my mind.

I got heaven on my mind. It keeps me singing all the time. This ole world treats me wrong. Sometimes it just ain't nowhere to turn. That's why I got heaven on my mind.

We have caught a slight glimpse of the effect of near blues on a church audience. Much of the participation is attributable to shouters who react to both the rhythmic gospel playing and word meaning. Although members of the clapping band of believers indicate some enjoyment through hand clapping and foot tapping, they are mainly involved in deriving spiritual meaning from religious verses. The equilibrium between meaning was commented on by "Mother" Williams as she addressed her Sunday school class.

A good Christian always tries to get something out of gospel singin. The gospel is the gospel . . . . I don't care if you sing it or preach it, the gospel is the gospel. To many folks in this church get carried away with the music. The music ain't all there is to the gospel. The devil can make music and will have you pattin yo foot like nobodies business. Its what the words say thats important . . . music ain't gon help nobody live God's way.

Despite the massive involvement produced by the near blues type of spirituals, action seekers remain an appreciative audience. They cast themselves in the role of observers. Action seekers do not "jam" themselves, but



watch the musicians and the congregation "get down."

Dependency of the Action Seekers  
on the Environmental Sectors

Here we are asking the same question of the action seekers that was asked of the shouters. Namely, what is the impact of the church's environmental sectors on the means-ends of action seekers? Again we are concerned with whether or not the church provides goal attainment mechanisms for action seekers or whether it must tap environmental resources.

A. Other Religious Bodies

The entertainment that is sought by action seekers can be found within the confines of St. Paul. The church provides the necessary mechanisms to facilitate the desired ends of most action seekers. However, in certain instances St. Paul is unable to satisfy the needs of all who are in search of secular ends. The church does not purposely establish relationships with other religious bodies to circumvent this problem but ties with other congregations do have latent benefits for action seekers. The coming together of more than one congregation makes for a larger, livelier worship service with greater attendance, an increase in the number of potential shouters, and a subsequent

increase in the amount of action. In other words, there is more to see and a greater opportunity to be seen.

Action seekers who have an interest in the style of ministers are exposed to a wide variety of personal approaches and individual mannerisms. Due to visiting ministers, those who are unimpressed with St. Paul's clergy need not withhold or transfer their attendance in order to find a style of preaching that satisfies them. Other ministers successfully employ the use of anecdotes, other actors, and a number of props. In addition, they are liable to introduce a variety of other entertainment techniques which strike the fancy of action seekers.

Regarding music, ties with other religious bodies means a combining of musicians and choirs. The increased depth of the musical department is likely to be the highlight of a joint worship event for action seekers. There will not only be the customary musicians and soloists but a whole new array of talent as well. Joint worship events often draw worshipers from a number of churches; they draw crowds and to some, that's where the action is. Entertainment can be found solely within the confines of St. Paul but the quality and variety of entertainment is affected by the churches' relation to other religious bodies. Though the church provides the necessary mechanisms for action seekers to achieve their desired ends, and the relation to

other religious bodies supplements these mechanisms, action seekers still have a transitory relationship to the organization. Because their needs can be met in a number of other churches and even in a number of other non-sacred settings, they may at any time divorce themselves from St. Paul.

#### B. The Black Community

St. Paul's relation to the black community is important to the means-ends of action seekers in a very remote way. Obviously, the musicians and congregational members who serve entertainment functions are residents of the black community. Apart from this, the church is able to provide mechanisms which enhance the attainment of the ultimate goal. The anecdotes that appear so frequently in the minister's presentations are enjoyed by action seekers primarily because they are cultural. They draw from the realities that confront certain members of the black community on a daily basis and therefore form psychological bonds which tie action seekers, and other congregational members to the black community. For the anecdotes to be effective though, the church need not establish relations with the black community.

Common experiences, rather than formal relationships or visible ongoing processes involving church and community, are the foundation on which the mechanism (anecdote) rests.

By quickly viewing the remaining mechanisms of, role playing, talking to the wall, and the use of other actors, it is easy to see that the minister is capable of providing sources of entertainment without relying on concrete ties with the black community.

#### Relation to the Metro Environment

Relations with the metro environment were extremely rare throughout the time span taken up by the research enterprise. Regarding action seekers, the church is able to make available the necessary mechanisms itself or to supplement them through joint worship services with other religious bodies. Therefore, ties with the metro environment are not a necessary part of the church's efforts to provide goal attainment mechanisms for action seekers. The finding is not a surprising one since entertainment is basically derived from action taking place within the church and mainly from religious behavior (shoutin) or from secular behavior being fused with religious phenomena (funny anecdotes, role playing, talking to the wall, and the use of other actors). Given this fact, it is not surprising that relations to other religious bodies are the most important to the means-ends of action seekers and church-metro environmental relations are the least important.

## CHAPTER IV

### "A SMALL BAND OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST"

Chapter IV examines the sub-group whose members think of themselves as a band of believers. Contained in the chapter is a discussion of the general characteristics that distinguish band members from others in the setting. After presenting a profile of the sub-group, an analysis of its means-ends will be undertaken in order that we might further understand what makes band members a distinctive group of worshipers. The reader will then be exposed to strategies which facilitate the means of the sub-group. Following the above sections of Chapter IV, which deal with band members and their group qualities, we will engage in a summary of changes in the contemporary church. The contemporary church will be contrasted with the familiar "down-home" church which band members experienced in an earlier portion of their religious lives. Finally, the chapter's concern will shift to questions of interdependence and dependency. That is, the interdependence of band members with other sub-groups and the dependency of the small band on environmental sectors.

### Some General Characteristics

"A small band of believers in Christ" is the core group of the church. They are the constituency that carries the brunt of the churches' work load for they are typically involved in fund raising, coordinating fellowship programs, evangelizing potential recruits, and an assortment of other activities necessary for the smooth functioning of the church. Carrying the work load of the church is no easy task for in their own words they "have been on the battlefields a long time." The length of time varies from member to member but the majority of the band have been raised in the black church.<sup>1</sup> Part of their early socialization stressed the benefits of church work and is perhaps responsible for their contemporary dedication to St. Paul. Their dedication encompasses more than the many hours spent on church-related matters. For them, dedication extends into their own personal lives; they profess to be Christians not just during worship service but throughout the week. Unlike the shouters who attend frequently but contribute little to the smooth functioning of the organization or the action seekers whose presence is sporadic, members of the band

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout the period of research various band members would mention the number of years spent in the church. They exhibited a sense of pride in being "raised up" in a baptist church. Also, one of the initial conversation pieces, during the beginning periods of the research endeavor,

continually participate in church activities. The regularity of and the wholehearted manner in which they participate elevates them to a place of special importance within the church setting as they are delegated certain organizational responsibilities. To the minister, they are not cold statistics . . . names on filing cards or a ledger sheet, as many members are, but are among the most important persons in the make-up of the organization. Much of their dedication to St. Paul is directed toward helping one's "church-home" but there are also personal reasons for the large investments of time, energy and skills.

That is, band members view their participation in church work as a contribution to their other worldly goal. They differ from shouters on this point in that shouters seek salvation by praising the lord through song and by welcoming in the Holy Spirit rather than by carrying out work tasks that benefit the church. The church is then seen as "a place to get ready for entrance into the house of God." The stress on future preparation, and church work as a part of the preparation, creates a situation which makes it difficult for them to be independent from the church. They are not outsiders to the actions and purposes

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(Cont.) centered around my church affiliation and a presentation of their background to me. The section on Fogism also sheds light on church socialization.

of the church but are a part of it (i.e., fellowship, visiting the sick, sponsoring programs, and the donation of time, talents and concerns). A consequence of the depth of involvement is the sharing of one's personal life and experiences. It is part of their personal lives as Christians that they bring to and share with fellow members of the band.

Band members do not deal with the pressures exerted upon them by their personal contacts with lives' realities by engaging in emotional display. Instead, the source of their catharsis is fulfilling the requirements necessary for membership in a band of fellow Christians. The family type of closeness which accompanies this membership makes it possible for them to verbally rather than physically dispel the riggers of life. By verbally testifying to their "trials and tribulations," the loose gathering of Christians becomes a band.<sup>2</sup> Through public testimony each member brings to the church his joys, sorrows, victories and defeats. And thus is able to discuss them informally and thereby provide band members with an opportunity to

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<sup>2</sup>Group solidarity and acceptance is fostered by the fact that band members are bound together by the sharing of common trials and tribulations. Testimony is a way of communicating shared experiences and is a way of "show 'em by tellin 'em."



participate in the Christian act of comforting. A person in bereavement or one having family problems is given verbal encouragement, told of God's plans for us all, or in the former case presented flowers, cards, and other indicators of sympathy. Comforting and other related acts are humanistic qualities which tie the band of believers together.

The band of Christians claim to be "members of the church by the Holy Spirit." As we mentioned earlier, band members do not often display the emotional elements associated with "gettin' the Holy Ghos but have internalized the Holy Spirit." Internalization of the Holy Spirit is simply a matter of being at continual peace with the spiritual force. Internalization is described by "Sister" Muldrew as she favorably comments on a fellow Christian by saying, "she has built a church in her heart and takes it with her everywhere she goes." The comment implies that band members perceive a difference between themselves and the "shouters." Band members have the church in them; whereas, shouters are still engaged in the activity of "receiving the 'Holy Spirit'." Being able to feel the continual presence of the Holy Spirit, gives members of the band a special incentive for believing in the "coming of the lord" for the Holy Ghost is the spiritual force which precedes the coming. Belief in the "coming of the lord," or what is referred to as "judgment day," is not always

thought of in theological terms.

When my father comes, I won't be worried  
cause I paid my dues. I've had my trials  
and tribulations here on earth. I don't  
mind suffering trials and tribulations for  
my God cause I know I'll be well taken  
care of when that day comes. My God is  
all right . . . Oh yes He is! My! My! My!

Band members view the resurrection of Christ in personal terms. It will be an event in which they will be reimbursed for facing the rigors of life by trusting God. "Brother" Muldrew speaks of the rewards to be handed down to true believers and also suggests that those who had not placed their trust in the Lord will be eternally punished.

People just don't go to church like they used to. Things ain't changed that much . . . times is still hard. And they gon get harder. The only way we gon make it is by holdin on to the Lord's hand. I don't care how rough things get, I am still gon believe in the Lord. God is testin us . . . he knows what he's doin. If we suffer through hard times and keep our faith, he'll do us right when He comes back. Don't fool youself though, if you don't trust in em on this side of the river, ain't no need to start when you get to the other side. Those that get turned away at the other side is in trouble. They ain't seen no troubles till God passes his sentence.

Eternal punishment for those who have not suffered trials and tribulation for God carries with it the notion of revenge.<sup>3</sup> "Mother" Porter's comments are similar to

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<sup>3</sup>Max Weber, in his *Sociology of Religion* by Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), discussed a similar

statements made by other band members as they are interspersed with the idea of retribution.

Ain't too many of us here today . . . but that's alright though. We don't have to take names and worry about who's here and who ain't. God keeps a record upstairs. When its all over . . . the ones that's payin the price will get to see the others take they punishment. They know that the wages of sin is death. God don told us what's gon happen if we don't serve him and folks still don't believe it. Ain't no need for me to say no more . . . every day has its day.

Also of importance is the constant emphasis on the suffering of trials and tribulations. In the minds of the believers in Christ, part of their mission here on earth is to suffer. Suffering is then interpreted as God's will. Trials and tribulations can be withstood because band members have placed themselves in God's hands. The dependency on a metaphysical being is verbalized in the often heard phrase, "until he comes we're in His hands, He knows just how much we can bear." They believe that, although things are beyond their control, God has a master plan for man and suffering is therefore an endurable enterprise. Suffering is seen as part of God's testing of man; to see whether or

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(Cont.) phenomena in the religions of the "underprivileged." He discusses the concept of "resentment" (resentiment) in the Jewish "ethical salvation religion." Of resentment he says, "it teaches that the unequal distribution of mundane goods is caused by sinfulness of the privileged; and that sooner or later God's wrath will overtake them" (p. 110). He also says, "the moralistic quest of believers serves as a device for compensating a conscious or unconscious desire for vengeance" (p. 110).

not he is "worthy of entrance into his kingdom."

The general characteristics of band members have been presented in an effort to help the reader formulate a mental image of what the sub-group is like. To further the development of this image, a brief sociological profile will also be presented.

Band members are drawn primarily from among the older members of the congregation. Their belief in working for the church is evidenced by them being office holders in the church. They are the foundations on which the organization stands and therefore can be found in status positions which range from deacons, to church mothers, to heads of important auxiliaries (i.e., heads of deacon boards, mothers boards, and the trustee board). Sex is seemingly not a factor in whether or not one is a band member. There are more women members than men but this is true of the church as a whole. Like sex, social class is not a prime variable in determining membership in the Christian band. For band members emerge from the general congregation which is quite homogenous (lower-class) in its class composition.

There exist a status scheme within the church which creates a bit of social distance between band members, action seekers, and shouters. Social distance is a result of the status differential between the three sub-groups. In the status scheme, the small band occupies the top

stratum. They place themselves in this position because they believe that as Christians they attempt to live righteous and "none but the righteous will see God."

#### Ends-Means of the Band

Suffering trials and tribulations here on earth is seen as a natural part of one's life. Such an interpretation of the here-and-now shapes the goals of the small band of believers. The ultimate goal of band members is two-fold. On one hand their desired end is to achieve freedom, through other worldly concerns. On the other hand, until the other worldly condition is achieved, the goal is to employ the deity as a means of getting through a "troublesome world." God's help is needed in dealing with daily existence because, in the words of the believers in Christ, "we all have burdens, everybody in the world has a burden." The need to employ God in dealing with a troublesome world creates a particular conception of God. They as believers cast themselves in the role of powerless children over whom "God not only rules . . . but he super-rules." The conception of God as a super-ruler is most evident in the activity of prayer. Note the powers attributed to God in the following prayer delivered by "Deacon" Kincade:

Father we need you this morning, we  
can't do without you. You give us

strength to make it from day to day, from week to week and from year to year. I was sick this morning but I am here because I knew. God healed a man who was sick for thirty years. God you are the doctor in the sick room and the lawyer in the courtroom. Yes, thou hath all the power. Don't move no mountains for me Lord. Don't move no stumbling blocks, just give me the strength to climb. Please don't leave us this morning Father. We need you to guide us through the streets, alleys, and by-ways of life.

Throughout the prayer, the implication is that "man can't make it without God." The God dependency is not for purposes of destroying the obstacles of life but is aimed at giving one strength to overcome the barriers which fill one's life with strife. God in his role of "super-ruler," <sup>sp.</sup> supersedes all other roles (i.e., doctors, lawyers, teachers, preachers, etc.). He then becomes the only means that one is able to put trust in as band members move through this troubled world looking for "a leaning post." No other source of comfort is as dependable as God. Living without God, to band members, is like living in a world alone and having nothing to live for. God has become the all pervasive center of their lives. Though many of them have never known the experiences which accompany the ownership of material goods, they continually speak out against the use of materialism as a crutch in helping one move through a troubled world. Without the aid of the deity life would be unbearable and in many cases an intolerable

situation. Thus, one's coexistence is dependent on finding a "leaning post." As "Sister" Powell implies, not just any leaning post but one that has demonstrated its permanence through time.

Sometimes in life we reach the stage where we feel we don't have nothin to live for. Sometimes in life our children goes off and leaves us. Friends go off and leaves us. Life becomes a burden when you don't have nothin to live for. Many peoples livin right now take dope cause they have nothin to live for. But even turnin to dope won't help! If you don't have no God to lean on, you're in bad shape. Some peoples are jumpin off bridges to lose their lives. But if you got God in your life . . . and in your homes, you got somethin to live for. Many mens and womens have died because they didn't have nobody to love them. God will love you when your friends, your mother, your father, and your brothers and sisters all leave you.

Before entering into a discussion on the means employed to achieve the ends of finding an aid to assist one in moving through a troubled world and the attainment of another worldly state, we would like to discuss briefly the other worldly. When the believers in Christ have waged their last struggle in their efforts to exist in "this strange land," they have hopes that "when my time comes God will give me a resting place in his kingdom." Phrases of the aforementioned type are characteristic of those used to refer to heaven. The typical pattern is the use of indirect references which include other phrases such as:

"one more river to cross," "my father's house," "salvation," and "a ticket on the last train." All of these synonyms are a diffusion from a rich body of church literature. They not only serve as synonyms for heaven but also carry connotations of what one must do to attain the ultimate state (i.e., one must cross that last river (death) by himself, salvation can only be worked out, and a ticket on the last train can only be purchased through religious dealings with the church).

Membership in the church, working for the Lord, and the suffering of trials and tribulations are positive qualities in the eyes of the small band but are not considered sufficient enough for one to attain the heavenly state. In order to qualify for entrance to the other world, it is not enough for one to be religious, one must be a "Christian;" as the latter one "lives according to the word of God," as the former one abides by "the tenants of man." Thus, the small band of believers in Christ believe that they are in the process of qualifying for entrance to heaven; whereas, the other members of the congregation are "fooling everybody but God."



## Various Means to the Desired Ends

### A. "Baptism"

Band members hold that "only the righteous will see God" and man is not born righteous. Given this belief, it logically follows that church members must follow certain steps as they move from religious persons to Christians (which qualifies them for admittance to heaven). These steps to heaven are the means by which members of the band can reach their primary goals.<sup>4</sup> Here, we would like to develop the idea that the means employed to get to heaven are the same means used to get through a troubled world. The integrity of our data indicates that there is no reason to treat them separately.

The first step in one's search for salvation is being baptized into the church. Baptism means more than the ceremonial feat of being emersed in a pool of water. Rev. Green's statement concerning the event clearly points this out:

I want to say to those who have been baptized . . . just because you've been in the water doesn't mean you've been saved. If you haven't been re-born you're goin straight to hell . . . straight to hell.

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<sup>4</sup>We feel that a further discussion of the concept of "means" is not needed at this point. We suggest that the reader apply the definition put forth in Chapter II as a memory refresher.

The emphasis is on being born again. An individual cannot see God until he has cleansed his soul of his former sins. Cleansing of the soul is a two-part process. First, a Christian must "repent unto the Lord;" a process which requires a person to recognize his sins and then "ask the Lord's forgiveness." We will not discuss, at this particular point, the acts involved in repentance and forgiving but will do so in the following section on "fogism." The second part of the cleansing process revolves around immersion. Immersion represents not just submerging an individual in an ordinary pool of water but in water which has a holy significance. The officiating ministers are careful to point out that they are not the highest authority in the ritual and that the ceremony is guided by the Holy Spirit.

I baptize you not in the name of Rev. Green, not in the name of Rev. Clark and not in the name of Rev. Thomas, but in the name of the Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost.

After an individual has been "taken to the water," they are not yet ready for entrance into heaven. For baptism is a preliminary step in the "gettin' ready" process, its outcome is believed to gain one membership in the house of the Lord. For members of the band, membership means that "somebody else is on the right road and nobody is mad but the devil."

B. "Working in the Name of the Lord"

Once having gained membership in the house of the Lord by being "born again," band members believe that a worshiper must not neglect to serve his church. In the actor's view, negligence in this matter can only serve to lessen the power of the organization, discourage its members, and above all else have drastic effects on own's own soul. Holistic involvement and support of the church and church programs is a key link in a person's quest for the chosen goal of heaven. By contrast, shouters and action seekers do not stress the importance of church work. Shouters may participate in doing work for the church but are more interested in raising the lord's name as a means to an end rather than assisting with various programs. Action seekers are more interested in observing the outcome of church programs than investing their time and talents to support the development of them. "Working in the name of the Lord" is such an important step in goal attainment that band members have seen fit to formalize it by way of the church "covenant."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The church covenant is a document which lays out the aims and purposes of the church. It also sets forth the prescribed duties of church members. Its document was established with the founding of the church, eighteen years ago. It was the band members, or at least a few of them, who developed the document when the church was located in the home of one of the church mothers.

We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk in Christian life; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity, and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and the expenses of them.

The believers in Christ consider themselves as upholders of this pledge. Rather than verbally upholding the enforcement of this passage, they firmly believe that it is their responsibility to demonstrate to their fellow band members and to the congregation that they are carrying out the duties laid down in the covenant. "Brother" Muldrew discusses this belief in an address presented during at Sunday afternoon "mission" service.

All of us know what mission is. Every Christian has a mission. Part of your mission is to work for St. Paul. That's what we all agreed to do when we joined and said we'd uphold the church covenant. There's a lot of back biting that goes on in this church. Some members that call themselves saved always runnin off at the mouth talkin bout, "sister so and so don't never do nothin for the church." You know what I am talkin about! Some of the ones that is workin for the church is just as bad. They always preachin and pattin themselves up [patting themselves on the back]. Well, it ain't nobody's business what the other fella is doing for the church . . . thats between them and God. And if your a Christian, you don't need to talk about how good you are. If youre workin for the church, all you have to do is carryout your mission . . . that's all. Others will see the fruit of your labor and take notice. The best way to get others involved in workin for the church is to be a worker yourself.

As candidates are baptized into the church, they are made aware of their responsibilities as Christians. The candidates are to aspire to fulfill these tasks over an extended period of time. They have as a role model, the various members of the band who are publically cited for their involvement and support of church programs.

Before I bring today's message, "Sister" Westbrook would you stand please. I want yall to know that this comes from my heart when I say this . . . and I means every word I say. Sister Westbrook came to St. Paul when the church was still a baby. And like the Christian she is, she helped bring the church where it is now. She's been doing great work for St. Paul. I for one am grateful and would like to show my appreciation. So, I am asking the officer to take up a collection for her. It ain't much but I'll start it off with three dollars. We askin everybody to dig in and give what they can. She's a member of the Trustee Board and I am gon suggest that they give her some flowers or somethin to show her some respect for the work she's been doin. It's the least we can do.

Public citations are a way for band members to honor their own, make a distinction between regular congregation members and those who have "been on the battlefield," and to demonstrate the necessity of not just sporadic involvement but continual involvement. The citation usually includes, length of membership in the church, work done in the church, the auxiliaries the person is active in, and most importantly, a chance to testify to one's church duties.

The formal demands for involvement and support of

the church are, at times, implemented by informal means. The minister is the key to coordinating, directing, and assigning members to specific auxiliaries and committees. Public pressure is used as a tactic in the spot assigning of members to auxiliary positions. As he publically interviews new recruits during "open church" ceremonies, he obtains information on a person's past church involvement (i.e., previous church attended, position held, and the reason for "falling away"). Once having acquired information with regards to the above questions he publically informs the individual of vacant positions in the church and then very quickly proceeds to assign them specific duties.<sup>6</sup> The minister is cast in the role of being the leader of the band of believers. The idea of him being "guided by the Holy Spirit" creates a situation in which he functions as the link between God and the members of the band. Hence, his position in the small band demands that he actively push for involvement in the church. He persistently points out that church involvement is not a matter of performing duties for himself or even for the church, but for God.

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<sup>6</sup> Rather than illustrating the process here, data is presented in Chapter VI. In Chapter VII, the process of "open church" is subjected to a more thorough analysis; especially in relation to pressure tactics employed by the minister.

We had a wonderful time over at Rev. Marshall's the other night. He's got some church over there . . . everybody does they part. Even the children is out working for the church. I wished more of yall would take that attitude. You can look at me funny if you want to . . . I don't care. I ain't askin you to do nothin for Green. The little work you do for the church don't help me none. The little money I gets ain't nothin! I don't have to be hear . . . If I wanted money I could do better by openin up a whisky house. I hate to say it but its the truth. I ain't askin you to do nothin for Green and I ain't askin you to do nothin for the church. All the work that you do for St. Paul is for God. This ain't your church building . . . it belongs to God.

So, in rallying support for participation in church activities, he conveys to his fellow Christians and to other religious individuals that by the act of serving the church they are indirectly serving God. No doubt his attempts at coordinating, directing and assigning positions works to reaffirm his position as a member in the band. In other words, he as a member, in addition to his duties carried out in the pulpit, must demonstrate that he is actively working for the continual existence and maintenance of the church. Failure to be out front in working for the church creates an image of him being above the church. Such is not the case since Rev. Green has, in the eyes of the band, "toiled and sweated eighteen years for St. Paul." Deacon Galvin spoke favorably of the pastor's involvement during a

Sunday school discussion on the subject and received ample support from other "deacons" and "mothers" who were present.

Most of us here this mornin have been with the church for a while so we can be frank with one another. Our lesson tells us to beware of false idols. A false idol could be a number of things. Say a minister is preachin the word so the church will serve him . . . that will make him a false idol. I think we should always question our leadership. Over the years we've all had fall-outs with Rev. Green over one thing or another. We may disagree with him on a lot of things. But one thing we all know . . . he's brought St. Paul a long ways. He's been out front carryin the load. You might disagree with him on how he preaches or how he runs the church but we know St. Paul comes first in everything he does. I don't mean to sing his praise cause only God can do that. But it helps sometimes to use live examples to get the lesson across.

In sum, the minister's own display of "working for the Lord" clearly demonstrates to others that he is out front and desires his position as head of their "church home." Holistic involvement in the church is formalized in the covenant, informally conveyed to the religious through the minister, and is continually being practiced by members of the Christian band.

In contrast to the social nature of involvement, members of the band have as an additional aim, the personal implementation of the section of the covenant which deals with contributions to the church and its programs. When coupled with the formal rationale for church support, and



the informal conveying of the formal rationale, personal commitment becomes the third and final level in working for the Lord.

It is the members of the band who seldom need be reminded of the wording of the covenant nor do they need to be pressured into supporting the church. Holistic involvement, which includes regular church attendance, contributing money, working on various auxiliaries, evangelism, and supporting church sponsored events, is a personal commitment aimed at "working out my soul salvation." By working for the Lord, the band believes that they will be paid. The payment, as Deacon Galvin describes it, is not in monetary terms nor is it the social rewards received by the religious. In place of these non-religious rewards the band of Christians will receive salvation.

I just want to work out my soul salvation.  
I, wouldn't care if I live to be a hundred,  
I would still keep workin' on it. The good  
Lord knows how long he wants to keep me  
around. I would like to find a place for  
my soul to rest after I pass. I don't want  
to go to that hot place.

The brief mentioning of age is significant because it points out the dynamics involved in working out one's soul salvation. The attainment of a resting place is not an affair which terminates after a single worship service or a year of working for the church. It is only achievable after years of worshiping, praying, and working for the

church. Seeking salvation is a life-long process which ends with death. Seekers are constantly questioning and upgrading their Christianity. The continuous nature of the quest for salvation is best summed-up by the familiar phrase, "I ain't what I used to be, but I ain't what I ought to be."

While support of the church and its activities are an important step toward the attainment of a resting place for one's soul, members of the band adhere to the idea that God, rather than themselves, is still the driving force behind their ability to participate. Being on the "battlefield" is possible only if one has strength and God is the source from which an individual's strength stems. So said "Mother" Williams during a testimony offered up during a Wednesday prayer meeting.

Our God has strange powers . . . strange powers. It's strange how God reactivates nature. He has strange powers. God doesn't tell flowers to bud . . . but they bud. God doesn't tell birds to sing . . . but they sing. If you put your trust in God, he will give you the strength to carry out his will here on earth. The Lord can make a young man old and an old man young. He can reactivate your nature.

Recognizing God as the source of one's strengths and blessings is a highly valued state of awareness among members of the band. The recognition of God as the center is superseded in value by the act of letting God and others

know that one is cognizant of his (God's) position in the affairs of man. The outward expression of the relationship between man's blessings and the power of the deity is so important that "giving honor and praise unto the Lord" is a requisite in the search for the end state of salvation. The importance of giving praise is outlined by "Brother" Andrews.

We as Christians forget to thank God for what he done for us. God likes to be thanked. It means something. We must show him a little grace and a little love.

### C. Prayer

Showing grace and love for the deity requires band members to either establish direct communication with the savior and thank him personally or that they extol him by telling others of his "goodness." Direct communication with the creator is possible through the mediums of praying and singing. Prayer serves a dual function. In one instance it can be used as a means of getting one through a troubled day-to-day existence. Prayer, in this situation is a matter of gaining strength by virtue of being connected to a force which is greater than oneself. A prayer delivered by Deacon Porter gives us some insight into the practice of praying and its culmination in a spiritual renewal.

In the condition we're in now . . . we need prayer. If we're going to make it anywhere in this world, we're gonna have

to make it on our knees. The reason I am calling Lord . . . is that Nixon has failed the state, the Dr. bills are piling up and fathers and sons is against one another. Father, I am askin you to lift our heads this morning. Just talkin to you is enough to lighten my load but some don't know how to bow down they heads. Father, we ask you to be patient and show them what you showed me one Sunday morning in Mississippi.

Whether or not prayers are answered is unimportant. What is important is that an individual is able to relieve his inner tensions by either bringing its source(s) to the surface or by listening to others put forth problems which they have perhaps felt the weight of themselves. The opportunity to speak to a listener (God) about the trials of life is a way in which a private catharsis can be reached. For this reason, "prayer meetings" on Wednesday nights are attended mostly by members of the band. Mother Williams, one of the most faithful of those in attendance, on several occasions confessed to her cohorts, "I don't mind Wednesday night prayer meetin', it gives me strength to go through the rest of the week."

If one talks to God through prayer he will listen. According to band members, "his line is never busy." Such is the view of "Brother" Russell who interprets prayer in the following manner:

I believe . . . in prayer because it keeps God at the side of the black man. We bound

down here in a strange land. We realize if it had not been for God we couldn't find our way in this strange land. All of you in here got a phone right here in your bassums, and Jesus is on the main-line. You can ring him up any old time. Jesus isn't dead! He'll come and walk with you. He'll come and talk with you. He'll hold your hand . . . He'll guide your feet and lead you through this troubled land.

The preceding quotation is not a prayer but can be categorized as a testimony. Even so, it affords us some knowledge on what band members thank God for. Without a doubt, prayer is used to thank God for a variety of blessings which run the gamut from material items such as cars and clothing, to one's health, to one's family welfare, to being able to worship in God's house. But in terms of frequency, members of the band use prayer as a means of thanking God for the fact that "He has brought us a mighty long ways, a might long ways." The reference is not so much to distance but to God's support in moving a race of people from a state of bondage to a world of trouble. Even though living in a world of trouble, there is hope since band members are firm believers in God as a guider of people. As Rev. Green puts it, "we can see where we've been but we don't know where we're going . . . only God knows."

#### D. "Singin God's Praises"

Giving honor and praise unto the Lord is also

accomplished through the singing of congregational hymns. "Singing God's praises," for members of the band, is a matter of putting emphasis on word meaning and keeping the rhythmic part secondary. Needless to say, the content of the most highly appreciated songs have to do with the ultimate goals of band members. For they are more likely to offer up the "old time spirituals" to be sung by the choir. The "old time spirituals" are songs which were sung in their earlier days as Christians, the days when the presence of musical instruments was not a necessary condition. Among the favorites are "Old Ship of Zion," "Amazin' Grace," and a solo version of "Shine On." It is not necessary to point the entire version of all of these songs. Instead the "Old Ship of Zion" will be used for purposes of content analysis.<sup>7</sup>

The "Old Ship of Zion," is quite descriptive of the type of song employed in giving honor and praise to the Lord.

'Tis the old Ship of Zion, the old Ship of Zion,  
'Tis the old Ship of Zion, get on board,  
Jesus is the captain, get on board.

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<sup>7</sup>For those who are interested, complete versions of the songs can be obtained by examining the hymnal published by the National Baptist Convention.

She has landed many a thousand when She comes,  
when She comes.  
Jesus is the captain, ain't no danger,  
Get on board, Get on board.

She's landed many a thousand,  
She landed my dear mother, She landed my dear father,  
Jesus is the captain, get on board, get on board.

The song is suited for the band of believers in that it contains elements which are central to the belief system of the group of Christians. It is an exposition on the powers of the savior. He has the authority to take care of those who are believers. Those who are believers and have worked out their salvation will be allowed to board the ship. The ship of course being an indirect reference to heaven. Heaven is in turn contrasted with a world of trouble since the ship is sailing from a troubled world, to Zion. Jesus is the captain of the ship; therefore, we have a re-emergence of the conception of Jesus as a guide in troubled times. Singing is a means of praising the savior so that he, as well as all those within hearing distance, are aware of the honors due him.

#### E. "Testimony"

In Chapter II we discussed testimony in relation to shouters. As part of that discussion, typical testimonies were presented and contrasted with those given by shouters. We presented ample data concerning typical testimonies but failed to establish clearly the category of individuals

responsible for them. This category is of members of the band. The writer does not wish to be repetitious but data indicates that testimony is an important mechanism in gaining membership in heaven. Therefore, it needs to be discussed with specific reference to band members.

In addition to praying and singing, "testifying" is also a means of giving honor and praise unto the Lord. As you recall, it was stated that typical testimonies are concerned with "what God has done for me" (see Chapter II). They are typically statements concerning one's belief in the Almighty. By giving testimony to actual incidents, band members are able to demonstrate the power of God, the faith they place in him as a guiding force, instances of living in a troubled world, and the varied experiences which accompany their trials and tribulations. Some testimonies also serve as a catharsis in that they provide an opportunity for individual band members to state outwardly their view of the world and the effect that it has upon them. Testimonies which present a drastic view of the world play upon the hopelessness and powerlessness of the individual and at the same time sensitizes listeners to the virtues of believing in God. A testimony "offered up" by Brother Harris exemplifies these characteristics.

Given honor and praise to God, and to Rev.  
Green. I am standin as a witness to a  
merciful God. He is truly a God of all men.



I am hear to tell you that my life wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for him. It gets hard to get up in the mornin and face this mean ole world. I know it ain't gon get no better. Folks been robbin, killin, and stealin since way before when. And they gon keep on doin it. Us black folks is been carrin a heavy load for a long time . . . Look like the load is gettin heavier and our shoulders' is gettin weaker by the day. Ain't nothin we can do about it but look to him for help. If we look to him we can't go wrong. He'll straighten the straight and right the right. Ain't no hope without him.

Testimony, as a part of seeking out salvation, is also a continuing process. Band members hold it to be their duty to give continual praise for "God's goodness." Failure to do so implies that they are not thankful and are thus forgetting the powers of the divine. Forgetting the powers of the divine means that one is perhaps attributing to much to himself and not being "humble unto the Lord." Many times, testifiers will include in their statement a few lines concerning their own humbleness. Deacon Powell, in one of his testimonies, maintained that:

I ain't here cause of my goodness but because of the goodness of God. If I had 10,000 tongues and 10,000 chances, I couldn't thank God for the many blessings I received.

Thanking God, whether publicly or privately, is more than a thoughtful act. Band members consider it a duty. It is part of their working for the savior. As God's work, it must be carried out to the fullest and in the most

enthusiastic manner. Praising God for others to hear is part of the complex of elements which separate believers from religious persons. Shouters shout but they seldom tell anyone why they shout. They simply shout without venturing forth an explanation. This position is one that separates shouters from members of the band. Mother Steward, a visiting evangelist who spoke at a function sponsored by the "Mothers Board," had this to say about the need to verbalize one's experiences with God.

When you're a witness for God, you tell it and you tell it everywhere. You tell it on the mountain, you tell it in the valley, you tell it everywhere you go. If you got enough Christianity in you, you ain't ashamed to tell it and tell it out loud. If I was on the White House lawn, I'd tell it to the President!

The stress on "telling it" is responsible for leading band members toward another step in their progressive movement toward a resting place. The urge to tell it, spreads beyond the confines of the church and is embodied in the act of evangelism, or "mission" as it is commonly referred to.

#### F. "Mission"

Mission amounts to active attempts to spread the gospel to members of the church family and to the man on the street. The first priority is to straighten out the church. Members of the band hold as their responsibility

the enlightenment of the religious. By "spreading the word," it is hoped that the religious will cease to live according to the tenants of man and adopt the word of God as their guiding premise. Christian ideals will then be substituted in the place of man's imperfect recipe for living.

Christianizing the band is necessary if they are to fulfill yet another world. The step is that of solidarity. Each member of the band believes that he or she must become an integral part of the group. Becoming an integral part of the group of Christians means that to "see God" an individual must worship as a band member and not as an individual. Brother Gaines spoke to the small group of regulars during a Wednesday prayer meeting and issued a warning in regards to stratification, or attempts at individuality among the band.

You must humble thy self to serve God. Some of us don't understand that. We won't put ourselves above our fellow Christians. You can't worship the Lord as an individual. We must enter into covenant with one another, in one body . . . with Christ. Some folks in this church can't humble they selfs. That's why they ain't Christians. They go through the motions but they ain't a member of the Christian band.

Band members believe in collective worship and that the Holy Ghost descends not to visit an individual but to visit "the church." Sister Spencer is supportive of this

view as she holds that:

The Holy Ghost comes . . . but it comes to visit the church not this member or that member. The Spirit ain't like you and me, It don't play no favorites. When it comes to visit St. Paul, its up to each person to receive it.

The church is in turn viewed as a band of worshipers and in God's eyes every member of the band has equal status. It is impossible to see God if an individual is above his fellow band members. For stratification is a man-made creation practiced by the religious who follow man-made tenants. No matter what statuses individuals bring into the church from the outside world, if they are Christians, positions of rank are dissolved as they worship with their fellows. Only Christian achievements matter when they examine "ther permanent record kept upstairs." Through collective worshiping and praying individuals are able to humble themselves in the eyes of their fellows and at the same time reach God.

While the band is being Christianized from within, true believers must also be concerned with the man on the street. The special effort extended in spreading the gospel to the unchurched involves the expending of what many church missionaries have deemed "Christianity energy." Mother Bradley, during a program to celebrate "mission week," issued a statement concerning the evangelistic role

of her fellow Christians. The thrust of her message had to do with the possibility of some band members becoming so worship-centered that they were defeating their own purpose.

Our church is in the midst of a mission field. We're in such a hurry to make it to church on Sunday morning, that we fail to see our mission around us. We must come to church to worship and then carry on our work outside. Outside is where our children are going astray on dope, on prostitution, and breakin in. We are a missionary church, but when it comes down to it . . . only a few carry out mission work.

Mission is one of the key tenants of the small band and they hold firm to the belief that the word of God must be spread via personal contact with others. The failure of individuals to actively tell others about their faith means, among other things, that one's belief in the savior is not as strong as it should be. Armed with a strong faith, a Christian is able to approach others, be either misunderstood or turned away, then reapproach the same individual while carrying only "the word." If one's faith is string enough, it will overcome the lack of faith of the individual being evangelized. Mission is the practice of "putting one's self last and putting others first." By sacrificing personal gains and not thinking in personal terms, band members believe that they are showing concern for other "children of God." Most of the concern is directed at saving the souls of others. To be content with one's own soul salvation is

not enough. True, "everybody must see God for them self," but band members argue that many will not see the savior because they have gone astray. Their job is to put the individual on the right road so that he will be able to find God. When the church (and they as Christians) has failed to carry out its mission, God's children are being forsaken. Such is the theme of an address delivered to the congregation during a worship service. The speaker is Deacon Galvin and he begins with the following warning.

Sometimes we are so busy that we forget what the church is for. The church is here to save souls. You can get happy all you want, but if nobody is being saved . . . the church ain't doing its job.

At St. Paul, the concept of mission is more an idea than a practice. Only a small handful of members engage in successful mission work. These few tend to be female, members of the "mission board," and have been with the church from its inception. Those who are successful at mission work, often receive public notice when an evangelized individual is brought into the church and presented to the congregation as a candidate for membership. The new candidate, when asked if there is anything he or she wishes to say, may bring a missionary to the public eye with their response.

I been thinkin about comin forward for a long time now. I came this mornin but I didn't get here by my self. Mother Williams will you stand please. I am here because this woman touched my heart. Many times she would come and visit and we would read

over the bible together. She put me on the right path and I just want to thank her. If some of yall don't know her . . . I can tell ya she's a woman of God. She's a Christian seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. She's for real!

Mission goes beyond the saving of souls in that one's lifelong task is to care about others. The church covenant states that, as Christians, band members must "contribute to the relief of the poor and spread the gospel through all nations." The financial state of the church makes it impossible to either assist the local poor or those in other parts of the world. But, band members are strong believers in taking care of "their own." "Their own" primarily refers to other members of the band or persons directly related to them.

Of the greatest concern in regards to other nations is the "motherland," Africa. There is strong sentiment, among the core group of the church, to send younger members of the church on missions to various African countries. The plans have not yet been actualized because of matters having to do with, the proper training of missionaries, and the financial cost. In addition, there is hostility from non-members of the band. The dissenters give two arguments in support of their position. One, why send money "over there" when there's mission work to be done all around us? Two, how can the church be certain the money will be spent for

what the officials say it will be spent for? Despite the disagreements, band members supported a fund raising drive to send a delegate to the National Baptist Convention for foreign missionary training. Their counter argument to charges leveled by non-members of the band were grounded in their religious interpretation of church support. That is, "our duties as Christians is to give cheerfully; once we have given freely we will be blessed by God." They further maintained that, "once the money is out of our hands, we are no longer responsible for it." If someone uses the money for other purposes "that's between them and God." "They must face God, they can fool us but they can't fool God . . . God knows."

#### G. Maintaining a Christian Existence

Without a doubt, the most difficult step in the movement toward heaven is maintaining a Christian existence. Members of the band are constantly seeking to establish and maintain a religious existence by "living in the world but not of the world." Their attempts can be seen, sociologically, as an effort to have a "closed system." Rather than living of the world, they would ideally prefer to saturate their lives with activities which can be carried out among fellow Christians. It is at this point that the band comes closest to paralleling a family. By establishing the majority



of their social relations with fellow believers, band members would theoretically be able to function as a family. In the family unit, the minister would assume the role of family head and each member would become an interdependent part of the whole. Membership in the unit would carry with it certain benefits; the friendship of other members, help in time of emergencies, prayer for the sick and shut in, and the overall notion of the church being "a home away from home." Each member of this closed network would contribute to its stability by living a Christian existence; the act would in turn shape the behavior of others.

The believers in Christ have hopes that the church is a means by which a religious existence can be sustained. They point to by-gone days when church activities and events were pulled together into a coordinated system.<sup>8</sup> As Brother Andrews stated:

The church used to be it. Music, hot fish-fries and a good time almost every night of the week. You could always find good Christian folks to mix with.

The most serious minded Christians still believe that it is

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<sup>8</sup>E. Franklin Frazier discusses the impact of urbanization on the black church. Urbanization resulted in new institutions which entered in competition with the church. As a result, the church no longer had a monopoly on social life. See, Franklin E. Frazier, The Negro Church in America (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964).

possible to live among the small band and then extend one's social ties to other Christians through fellowship. Fellowship is, to them, a continual effort to establish relations with other Christians and is the basis for avoiding non-Christian ties. Contacts with non-Christians, according to the religious idealism of "living in the world but not of the world," would be for evangelistic purposes.

Speaking from a sociological perspective, "living in the world but not of the world" is an impossibility. The impossibility of the task lies in the church's dependency on its environment. To meet certain survival imperatives the church must interact with its environmental sectors. Members of the band are not social thinkers, yet, most of them can see the infeasibility in their own thinking. Rather than a sociological interpretation, they attribute the failure to live successfully amongst fellow believers to the continual presence of the devil. It is the devil who stands in the way of true Christian brotherhood. It is the devil who initiates and sustains "ditch-digging" and "back-biting."

"Back-biting" is the age-old art of gossiping. "Ditch-digging" is a label used to denote the skillful art of purposely spreading lies so that the intended victim will suffer irreparable damage to his family and to his reputation as an active Christian. Together, "back-biting" and "ditch-

"digging" are responsible for the lack of cohesion in the church. Members of the band attribute the inability of the church to function as a closed circle to the wide-spread occurrence of these two phenomena. The two activities range from the malicious spreading of lies about a certain Sunday school teacher who is in competition with one of his counterparts, to the more serious question of church officials making away with \$3,000 in church revenue.<sup>9</sup> "Back-biting" and "ditch-digging" are human qualities which come about as associations become more personal in nature. So, as band members share more and more of their life space with one another, the activities flourish. So detrimental to the church are ditch-digging and back-biting, that the minister must spend much time in the pulpit cautioning his congregation to "testify to what you see and not what others tell you they saw." The minister is himself drawn into the constant rounds of gossip, and to clear the air, he is not opposed to presenting his case to the congregation.

My wife would like to thank everyone for the cards that you sent to her mother while she was in the hospital. I just wanted to thank the church myself. I am going to say something I shouldn't say . . . but I'll

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<sup>9</sup>For example, in the incident involving the competition for pupils by the two Sunday school teachers, one teacher's gift for working with children was slighted by his adversary. His large class sizes were said to result from the stealing of pupils and the encroachment on the territory of other instructors.

say it anyway. While she was out of town visiting her mother she received another letter. This one was from a young lady in this church.

A young lady wrote and told her I had been carryin on with other women. I want to let that person know, this mornin, that I didn't appreciate it. Even if I was . . . it's my business (a hail of Amens are heard as the audience realizes he's getting worked up) and they ought to mind theirs. I pay the rent, the gas, the lights, and the water bills and that makes it my business. You got to keep your house in order. You got to hoe your own row, you can't hoe nobody elses. That's what's the matter with the church today. Members always diggin ditches for the other fellow. Don't get me started . . . I am gonna sit down, I don't have to say no more.

During informal periods of discussion (usually during Sunday school), one can see that band members continually instruct one another in regards to back-biting and ditch-digging. Their instructions are more practical than religious for they openly admit that activities which result in back-biting or ditch-digging are filled with temptation. They first make the distinction between "sinning inward" and "sinning outward." If an individual commits a sin and is the only one having knowledge of that sin, then they have sinned inward.<sup>10</sup> If individuals engage in sins with other

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<sup>10</sup>The acts which constitute a "sin" are by and large laid down by the Ten Commandments. Added to these are activities concerning the use of drugs and alcohol, frequently attending out of the way places, gambling, the use of foul language, lust, and etc.

persons, the moment they become aware of the sin, they have sinned outward. Sinning outward is then the most serious because if more than one person has knowledge of it, the groundwork is laid for back-biting and ditch-digging. The main point is, if you must sin keep it to yourself. In the event that sinning must include others, it should preferable be done among fellow Christians. Sinning in this fashion means that fellow Christians will forgive one another and in the long run strengthen each others faith. Christians can thus commit a worldly sin while not being of the world. They can therefore remain "unspotted from the world." The concepts of inward and outward sinning and being unspotted from the world are illustrated in a story told by "Sister" Adams to her Sunday school class.

A few years ago, one of the members of this church was known to play the horse. I ain't gon mention her name but you that's been here for awhile know who I am talkin about. Anyway, the name ain't important cause I ain't tryin to run her down.

Well . . . one day she was at the track just bettin away. She looked up and saw one of the deacons was at the track too. All that time she had been sinnin . . . but nobody knew about it but her. Course the good lord knew too. She had been sinnin inward. The moment her and the deacon saw each other she had sinned outward.

Things would of been alright since only the two of em knew about it but the deacon had the nerve to bring that mess into the church. All her friends heard about it and some of em wanted her brought before the Trustee Board.

A big mess was started and folks who ain't never been in a church was talkin about it. If the deacon had kept his mouth shut and kept the thing between two Christian she could of stayed unspotted from the world. As Christians they could of worked the thing out without draggin in other folks.

Finally she was brough before the Trustee Board but what could we do. The reverend asked the deacon "what he was doing at a race track . . . savin souls?" It's true, if he hadn't of been there hissself he'd never known. He could have talk to her as a Christian but he had to put her business in the streets.

The notion of establishing and maintaining a religious existence is based in idealism. There exists a discrepancy between the real and the ideal. Though band members believe in living in the world but not of the world, they realize the impossibility of doing so. As a result, they have compromised by adhering to a Christian existence while within the confines of the church or while in contact with other religious bodies. When they move beyond these boundaries they are very much "of the world." The behavioral conduct of the two different worlds is referred to as "ways of the world" and "ways of the church." When in the church, band members take on a different set of beliefs, values, and attitudes. And a distinct language as well. More so than shouters and action seekers, band members have a much deeper commitment to the "ways of the church."

### Strategies: Facilitating the Means of the Small Band

Working out one's soul salvation so that heaven becomes a final resting place, and struggling from day-to-day in a world dominated by trouble, are goals that each person must strive for on an individual level. The means by which individuals are able to achieve these goals, i.e., gaining membership in the house of the Lord by being born again, holistic involvement and support of church programs, giving honor and praise unto the Lord, establishing and maintaining a religious existence, becoming an integral part of the group of fellow Christians, and mission, are highly dependent upon the initiative of each individual. The ends chosen by band members are obtainable, for the most part, without others acting as facilitators. Stated differently, individual band members must purchase their own tickets and personally communicate their needs for daily assistance to the deity. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising to discover that the minister offers few strategies which facilitate the means-ends of band members. However, there are a few instances in which the minister acts as a facilitator.

#### A. What God has Done for Me

From the pulpit, the minister adds credence to the testimonies given by band members. He reinforces the

validity of God's goodness and at the same time reaffirms the faith placed in him as the head of the band by testifying to what God has done for him. His testimony sets him apart from the rest of the congregation as an example of what God will do for those who trust in him.

There is a disease in this land called cancer. When you got cancer you try to keep it a secret. You don't tell your friends. You don't tell your family. I tried the doctors and they could only go so far. I heard someone say . . . when you tried everything and it fails . . . call doctor Jesus, he's always on the main-line. Look like I was goin down day by day. Finally I said . . . I believe I'll make a long distance call and I called Jesus!

Whether or not the story is true is unimportant. The important thing is the presentation of himself as an extreme case. An extreme case who has been reprieved from a sure death. The use of dramatics, if it does nothing else, gives believers a large dose of hope. We suspect that it is easier to deal with the trials and tribulations of daily life if individuals are shown that others have, and are, suffering much more than they are. The presentation of an extreme case facilitates and strengthens the belief in God's goodness. If the deity is able to handle extreme cases, lesser trials and tribulations are perhaps bearable. Individuals who are faced with trials and tribulations are given a tested and proven model to follow. They simply do what the minister has done; "call Jesus" through the medium of prayer.



## B. Use of the Bible

Regardless of how much a minister testifies or what strategies he uses in dealing with the other sub-groups in the church, he must integrate the bible into his text to satisfy members of the band. The bible contains statements about life after death, as well as, an assortment of stories, anecdotes, and verses on, praying, living as a Christian, serving God, and giving him praises. In short, the bible underscores the ends-means of the band. The minister uses the bible to footnote and thus add credence to the means employed by band members to attain their chosen ends.

Reading and quoting the bible from the pulpit assures band members that they are on the right road; for the text is accepted by true believers as the literal truth. A discussion of education and its relation to "learnin somethin" provoked Deacon Powell to respond in the following manner.

I want to tell the Sunday school about learnin somethin. A college education is fine . . . you need to get a good job. But the greatest schoolin you're ever goin to get in life is from the scriptures. They are God's words. You can have two masters degrees and a doctors degree and still be a fool.

The view of education presented here is liable to change. A shift in positions is dependent on the type of audience one is addressing. A negative view of education

and a positive view of a biblical interpretation of life is stressed when speakers are appealing to band members. In contrast, when addressing the youths of the church, a strong emphasis is placed on the value of higher education. This is to be expected since band members are highly interested in "spreadin the word." The use of the bible in the pulpit is a means of communicating the word so that it can in turn, be spread. The importance placed on "the word" explains the preference for a sermon containing bits and pieces from the bible. While shouters prefer "dynamic messages," the believers in Christ would rather hear the "pure gospel" as it is found in the bible. A minister who preaches the "pure gospel" can expect a sturdy hail of responses from band members as he repeatedly begins or ends statements with the phrase, "the bible says" . . . .

The bible is also a convenient tool for humbling everyone present. It is the mechanism which places everyone on the same footing. The document can be used as a leveling device. That is, as a strategy for emphasizing status equality among members of the band. The most skilled of ministers go as far as to destroy their own status by declaring their respect for the word of God.

I didn't write the words in this bible.  
So don't blame Green cause the bible  
affects me too. The bible is like a shot-  
gun . . . It'll shoot and kill what's in  
front of it, but the person holdin it gets  
a jolt too.

The minister is able to become an integral part of the band by showing the power that accompanies the word of God. He frequently tells the band that his job is to carry the message and the words of God were written by men who had "the spirit of God in them." This fact, he claims, is evidence enough for him and the rest of the band not to challenge the bible.

The bible is also filled with stories which allow the minister to compare and contrast the small band with historical groups of believers who also experienced the trials and tribulations of life. A story delivered by Rev. Green, as a prelude to a Sunday morning sermon, is an excellent example.

Moses was at the red sea and there with him were people that were praying to the Lord . . . to get out of slavery. When they was in captivity they wasn't allowed to speak to the master (Lord). But they prayed anyway. They prayed to the Lord to send them a leader. A leader that would deliver them from captivity.

Well . . . the Lord heard their cry. They wanted freedom but didn't want to bear no burden. They got to the red sea and heard about Pharoah's army. They became scared and wanted to turn back. Those that had faith, felt they could make it. Well . . . what you trying to say now minister [speaking to himself but thinking out loud]?

I am sayin that Negroes got to suffer some things to be somebody. When times get hard, we want to turn back. You black folks here this mornin, you got a red sea to cross and an army is closin in behind you. We've got

to go for victory! There's victory on the other side.

The story pertains to the contemporary black experience. It facilitates the belief in a people or a band bearing a collective set of burdens. Furthermore it presents biblical evidence that the bearing of burdens by a people is not in vain but is the way to freedom. Freedom in this situation is analogous to crossing over to the other side, where there is peace (a victory). All in all, the story suggests that the suffering of trials and tribulations is a matter of paying one's dues. One's dues must be payed in order to demonstrate faith in the divine. If a group of persons have faith, they will be relieved of their burdens and safely delivered to "the other side." The theme of the story is quite simple; the only way to make it is as a people (band). A people who have put their trust in God.

C. The Theme on an Eventual Reward

The clergy must continuously hold up to band members the possibilities that lie ahead. By talking about the rewards of serving God, the minister is able to instill in band members the idea of not just laboring but laboring for an eventual pay back. In holding up the possibilities, the minister resembles an expert salesman whose concern is to communicate the benefits of installment buying. (In effect, expositions on the rewards of suffering trials and

tribulations, being born again, giving honor to God, living a religious existence, and humbling thyself facilitate the attainment of the ultimate ends selected by the band.) Facilitation is possible since the minister explicitly states what the product is that's being sold, and more importantly, how one can go about making the purchase.

One of these days, we all gonna have to ride that old ship. Jesus is the captain of the ship. I got my ticket. Not Rev. Baskin's or Deacon Hadick's but Green's ticket. Ain't but one way man can make it to heaven and that's the church. This is the only place where you can prepare for it. I want to tell you this mornin . . . I said there is a life after death. You don't want to hear me this mornin . . . I said there is a life after death. You have to be baptized into the church to seek life after death.

The last train is leavin soon and I got my ticket. Some folks gonna miss the last train cause they wanna clean house on Sunday. Some have to worship their cars. But I got my ticket on that last train to heaven. Don't miss the last train leavin out of your life. You can only get your ticket through the church.

When talking about purchasing a ticket, the clergy also informs band members of what they should not do unless they want to risk the opportunity to "get on board." Implicit in messages about eventual rewards is the presentation of heaven as an opportunity that must be seized upon as quickly as possible. Time is a prime factor in the purchasing of one's ticket for "tomorrow is not promised to us."

To make heaven seem as if it is a desirable place and therefore worth the price one must pay for a ticket, the minister elicits descriptions that forces individuals to contrast the esthetics of heaven with the conditions and state of affairs found here on earth.

They tell me my father's house is worth goin  
to. I don't know what all is there cause  
I ain't been yet. But they tell me . . .  
there will be no dyin in my father's house,  
there will be no cryin in my father's house.  
There won't be no muddy streets, we'll  
walk on roads lined with gold. The sun  
will always shine on my father's house.  
Yes, it'll shine everyday!

Band members who possess a strong belief in heaven must feel that the price to be paid for a ticket is high, but the eventual rewards are well worth their weight in trials and tribulations. To many, the thought of heaven and the mental images associated with it is enough to "raise up a hung down head."

### "Fōgyism": The Church as a Dynamic Social System

Thus far we have presented an analysis of the types of collectivities found within the church setting. Accompanying the separation of worshipers into three distinct sub-groups has been a means-ends analysis of each respective unit. By thinking of worshipers as shouters, action seekers, and believers in Christ the reader is apt to

forget that the three sub-groups, although pursuing different ends, are interdependent with one another. The band of believers rely on shouters and action seekers to sustain the church. Since band members are the pillars of the church they must make concessions to the other sub-groups. They allow for emotional elements in the worship service; even though they feel that it is not a valid indication of whether or not an individual is "saved." Emotionalism is met with contradictory feelings by members of the band. It is frowned upon but at the same time it is accepted since it demonstrates (to non-believers) the existence, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Action seekers are an important part of the evangelistic ends of band members; thus, their presence is both tolerated, and useful. By evangelizing action seekers two things are accomplished. They are pulling monetary support into the church and band members are provided an opportunity to put into practice a key Christian tenant.

The interdependence of band members with the other two sub-groups is, in many respects, a one-sided affair; on the other sub-groups is much stronger than the other two groups dependence on the band. Such a balance of power makes it necessary for band members to take into account the other two sub-group's preferences for worship events that differ in form and content. To pacify both action

seekers and shouters, band members make concessions which are not accepted wholeheartedly. Many changes are frowned upon because they result in the destruction of church traditions. The reluctance to accept changes in church traditions is referred to (by those favoring reform) as "fōgyism."<sup>11</sup> Fogyism implies that the three sub-groups are at odds with one another. More specifically, that band members are at odds with the other two sub-groups. However, the changes instituted within the church over the past years is an indication that the units of analysis are more in consensus than in conflict with each other.

Although the primary focus of the following pages will be on changes within the church, the intent is to view fogyism as it relates to our original research problem of . . . the church's relation to its environment. Fogyism is related to the research problem because it has to do with changes in the church's environment. We will be discussing changes in the family structure; with the family of course being a unit in the environmental sector designated as the black community. From our discussion, it will hopefully become clear to the reader that changes in the family (environment) can result in changes in the church, and

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<sup>11</sup>An old fogy is one who is considered behind the times. Fogies are over-conservative and have old-fashioned views and ideas.



changes in the church can be responsible for an attribution of the means of band members.

Methodologically, the best way to catch a glimpse of some of the recently instituted changes is to examine the role of band members as transmitters of church culture. They transmit church culture from generation to generation by reminiscing about the old ways of worshipping. When they engage in conversations about "down home ways," what they are really doing is contrasting the contemporary urban church with the southern rural church of the past. Band members have changed their geographic residence from rural to urban over a number of years; likewise, the church and many other aspects of black life have undergone changes to meet the demands of individuals who now find themselves in a new environment. On the changes in the church, Deacon Clark commented, "Used to be a time when all we did in church is sing, pray, preach and give."

Most of the changes mentioned by band members have to do with the means which they typically employ to attain their ends. These changes are reflected upon as if the earlier churches which they participated in contained a very large number of believers in Christ and few shouters or action seekers.<sup>12</sup> It apparently was a time when "folks took

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<sup>12</sup>Regarding this matter, a theoretical note strikes

their religion serious." Perhaps the best place to begin reflecting on the changes is with acceptance into the church.

#### A. Baptism

Many years ago, when many of the band members first "turned to Christ," the prerequisites for entrance into the church were necessarily more exacting. Today, the procedure calls for the individual to become a candidate for baptism, undergo the baptism ceremony and the "right hand of fellowship." Following the completion of these steps, a person becomes a member in good standing. Gone from the ritual of acceptance is the requisite of demonstrating the depth of one's faith. In place of the stress on communicating one's sincerity to others, there has emerged a business-like orientation to recruiting members into the church. The church leans more in the direction of increasing its members, which in turn adds to the financial base of the organization. The desire to induct persons on a numerical basis rather than on the strength of their desire to intensify their religiosity has resulted in the elimination of testimony at the "moaning bench."

In earlier days, a candidate for baptism was not

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(Cont.) the writer. Can the normal progression of the black church be traced according to sub-groups? The band members being the first group, the shouters second and then the action seekers. If this is possible, what will the next generation produce?

allowed to participate in the ceremony until sanctioned by the elders of the church (i.e., church mothers, deacons, minister, etc.). Part of the sanctioning process was to require prospective candidates to come before the moaning bench on a number of occasions, "until he was ready." At the moaning bench, the individual demonstrated his readiness through repenting his sins and thereby cleansing his soul. When the elders of the church were satisfied with the quality of the performance, the future candidate had to then establish religious ties with a deacon of the church. After many hours of talking and reading the bible, the deacon made a decision regarding the appropriate time for the candidate's readiness to be discussed with the minister. Following the approval of the minister, all sanctions against baptism were removed. Baptism following the long process of "show' em by tallin' em," was preferably conducted in a natural body of water.<sup>13</sup>

Today the mandates of urban living have altered the location of the ceremony from a naturalistic setting to a church setting. In some cases, the act of total emersion

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<sup>13</sup>Leroi Jones indicates that total emersion was "perhaps particularly attractive to the early slaves because in most of the religions of West Africa the river spirit was thought to be among the most powerful of the deities." See, Leroi Jones, Blues People (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963), p. 38.

has been replaced by sprinkling. The movement from a naturalistic setting, the business aspects of recruitment, and removal of the moaning bench and candidate-deacon, candidate-minister, relationships are all indicators of a decline in the importance of baptism. And also of the band. Brother Gains, among others, recalled the importance baptism once had in the church, and his memory of by-gone days lead to the following comment.

We should all . . . show concern for baptism. There was a time when folks would walk miles for baptism. Some rode in the back of wagons.

Baptism was clearly an important event in the life of the candidate. In addition it was an occasion for both the church and the family of the candidate. The individual's family was a key factor since they, at that time, "had religion in the home" and there was much stress placed on church membership. The business like manner of having to count heads for monetary reasons has eroded away at the religious significance of the event. In the words of many band members, "anybody can join the church," and "some ain't bit more saved than the man in the streets." In sum, it is now possible to be a member of the church without being a true believer in Christ. Persons may now be either shouting or action seeking members of St. Paul. All is not lost though, for it is good to have these people in the church, where they will be exposed to the workings of the deity.

B. "Havin Church"

Band members come to St. Paul on Sunday mornings to "have church." Having church has traditionally meant that the small band enters into communion with the deity and the minister serves as the intermediary as he believes the message. The true believers feel as if nothing should distract from having church and if you didn't come to have church you should be respectful and let others do so. The important factor in having church is not numbers but the faith of the believers. The presence of a small number of worshipers is not disheartening if they are sincere. When the numbers dwindle some form of testimony is usually offered up to draw those in attendance together and reaffirm their commitments to the deity and to their mission. Mother Porter, upon noticing the small numbers in attendance at Sunday school one morning, took the floor and remarked that:

I am glad to be here this morning, just to see people praisin' God. I for one don't need the crowds to praise the Lord. We can make due with what we have here. A crowd ain't never saved nobody . . . we got to do that ourselves and now is a good time to start. I don't know about you . . . but I came to have church!

But more often than not sizeable crowds are there. And their presence adds to the worship service but also interferes with having church. Members of the band, most of whom were "raised up in the church," equate having church

with displaying "respect for God's house" while "the Lord is carryin out his work." In other words, having church means worshiping the deity and at the same time displaying a set of manners which convey the respect that one owes the deity and those in communication with him.<sup>14</sup> Visits to the house of a neighbor are accompanied by certain manners; likewise, when individuals visit the house of God proper manners are in order. Band members constantly voice complaints about the disrespect for God's house. The most disrespectful persons are the children. Rather than directly addressing them on issues of eating in the "Lord's house, damage to church furniture, and walking in the church," they convey their opinions to the parents (who are guilty of many of the same things).

The minister becomes a disciplinary agent in controlling non-church behavior. Especially since he heads the house, in much the same way that a father heads a family, and demands total respect so that he may "bring God's message." To bring the message and maintain the flow of the worship

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<sup>14</sup>During the research enterprise, various individuals told of instances in which the set of manners called for them to huddle the family together during storms or turn off radios and television sets while "God had it thunderin and lightenin." The worshipers themselves do not practice these mannerisms but were subjected to them by parents and grandparents.

service, the minister must police the sanctuary so that interested parties can have church. The concession being made is this; band members tolerate ill mannered action seekers and children who have not been socialized in church manners. Tolerance for action seekers has been mentioned earlier (i.e., evangelism and revenue). The children, on the other hand, come as a package deal. They are often forced to attend worship services for the lack of a babysitter, or because parents feel that church attendance is part of "raisin' em right." At any rate, band members contend that the responsibility for church discipline has shifted from parent socialization to policing from the pulpit. Sister Williams is representative of those who view the change as a disruptive element in the activity of having church. When commenting on the issue she said:

Children of today don't know how to act.  
 Mama didn't allow us to cut-up and act  
 a fool in church. Huh! We'd get our  
 brains knocked out tryin to be fast!<sup>15</sup>  
 Seem like parent just don't care any-  
 more. It ain't the child's fault . . .  
 its their nature to wanta play and be  
 manish.<sup>15</sup> They parents ought to teach  
 'em how to act . . . some folks Do wanta  
 have church you know! Use to be the minister

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<sup>15</sup>"Fast" refers to the act of engaging in behavior that adult consider inappropriate for one's age. Likewise, "manish" involves a young person conducting themselves in an adult fashion or holding attitudes on a subject that is restricted to the adult population (i.e., cross-sexual relations is such a subject).

didn't have to say nothin . . . all he had to do was preach. Now, everytime you look around he got to ask for quiet or ask somebody to stop walkin.

C. "Raisin 'em Right"

Permissive child rearing, as it pertains to church manners, was not always the case. Band members were socialized into the world of the church by practices that were parental centered. According to them, the minister seldom had to enter into matters of discipline. Sister Williams, Mother Porter, and Deacon Galvin, during a three-way conversation, all agreed that during their upbringing parents used eye contact as major means of control. The child was disciplined enough at home so that visual communication was enough to curtail frowned upon activities.<sup>16</sup> Visual communication primarily took the form of "batting" or "rolling" the eyes at children. The subtle motion of the eyes was enough to control children without uttering a word or resorting to more physical means of control. The repeated mentioning of the phenomena of eye control would warrant a fuller investigation into child rearing practices associated with the rural southern heritage. Parents were also able to control the many disruptive side effects which

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<sup>16</sup>The researcher had some knowledge of this prior to initiating the investigation. Over a number of years, the notion of control by eye contact has been heard often.



accompany boy-girl relationships which attract more than a few action seekers to the church.

Girl-boy relationships (at present) are fairly obvious as both sexes, dart in and out of the worship service, meet in the dining area, sit together and visit, and pay little attention to those trying to have church. Such was not always the case. Sister Garret drew rounds of laughter from the Sunday school audience as she reconstructed a portion of her early teens.

Old folks used to sit so close tryin to see everything till they couldn't see nothin. You young folks today thing you getin away with somethin but we done already traveled that road. We done enjoyed it and forgot it. When I was a teenager momma wouldn't let us go nowhere with a boy lessen a grown person was with us. Tell'em Deacon Powell, they think I am jokin! We was doin the same things they doin today . . . only we had to be a little bit slicker.

#### D. Reading the Bible

Along with proper church manners, the reading of the bible was an activity that took place in the home. Band members were part of an era in which the bible was not only read but was learned. Deacon Galvin, Mother Porter, Brother Linebarger, and Rev. Green recalled that on several nights during the week, small bible groups would assemble in their homes to collectively read biblical verses. Children took part in this endeavor and were later volunteered for

recitations of biblical verses as part of the church program. Just as child rearing has changed, reading of the bible is now a church-centered activity. The scriptures are read and interpreted from the pulpit and even Sunday school classes have moved away from bible reading. Bible groups are an artifact of the religious past. In their place has emerged either an individual use of the bible or the use of the document as a reference source in group worship events.

There are still many band members who take great pride in their knowledge of the bible. Some are even identified by their fellows as knowing a lot about the scriptures; even more than many ministers. The contesting of each others biblical knowledge takes place in small Sunday school groups. It is here that an individual is able to receive status for his biblical knowledge. Biblical knowledge is somehow equated with knowledge about life. Biblical knowledge is considered the best source of information about the world and its varied conditions. To band members and band members only, the decline in the learning of the bible has hurt the church as a whole. They still believe that the reading of the bible collectively in church and in homes is the best way "to learn what you need to know about the world."

Action seekers and shouters are not so sure about

the heavy reliance on the bible. For many in these categories the document is difficult to read, happened a long time ago, is filled with interesting "stuff," or is a household item to be dusted off and written in on personal occasions (i.e., births, deaths, etc.). While band members feel that the document is worth understanding and can only be understood if one studies it, members of the other two sub-groups have a strong desire to forsake it, except when the minister takes the role of narrator. Even with the minister displaying his skills, one cannot be certain whether the interest is in the written word or in the manner and style in which it is conveyed.

#### E. The Power of the Pulpit

There have been many changes that have occurred in the Black Church over the past decades. In St. Paul's case, the preceding chapters mentioned changes in the musical style from spirituals to gospel music accompanied by a variety of instruments, the inclusion of material other than the pure gospel in the message; and, declining attendance at mission, revivals, prayer meetings, and Sunday school. These changes have left band members with the impression, "folks ain't as religious as they use to be." With the church being such a dynamic system, it would seem that the role of the clergy must have undergone changes too. Such

an assumption is correct. Like the respect for the Lord's house, and for the work of God, the power of the pulpit has declined.

The believers in Christ say that many in church have lost respect for the pulpit (this includes many ministers who they claim are not "God-sent" but are in the church for their own personal gains). Many times comments on respect for the pulpit are directed at either shouters or action seekers. Band members point an accusing finger at the other two sub-groups by suggesting, "all they want is somebody up there hoopin and hollerin." The preference for a physical minister is seen as a threat to religion. Religion is threatened because "they don't care whether he's saved or not; men from the streets can get up there and preach." Band members are able to tolerate a pulpit which appeals to the other collectivities by looking to "the word." They have interpreted the world as saying, there will be "false witnesses" in the pulpit, but God has use for them. Their usefulness lies in their ability to attract persons to the church. If a minister is a "false witness," his debt will be settled sooner or later with the deity. For "every crooked tongue must confess."

Band members are tailor made for the gospel for they have internalized many of its tenants. On the other hand, the religious commitment of others in the setting is not as

strong. Since band members have failed to get their counterparts to adopt their level of involvement, the church has changed and is subject to change even more. Competition with other urban institutions of the black community, and the changing life styles of blacks, has forced the church into an accommodating rather than a dictating role. In its new role the church, and band members as the core group of the church, must adjust to its clientele if it is to compete for a market. As we have pointed out, adjustments have come in the form of concessions they are able to make concessions because most involve institutional aspects of religion, they affect the belief structure very little. The changes will not destroy their ability to have church for they are able to find solace in the much quoted biblical saying, "Jesus is the same today as He was yesterday and He'll be the same tomorrow as He is today." As a supplement they frequently add, "many things change, but Jesus never changes." "The same Jesus that was in Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, is the same Jesus that's here today."

Group Interdependence; Two Goals  
of the Minister as Indicators

So far we have attempted to explain the interdependence of the three sub-groups in terms of the concessions made by band members. A closer look at the relationship

between sub-groups reveals additional data. Namely, that there are times when worshipers cannot be viewed in terms of shouters, believers in Christ, and action seekers. This should not be a surprising fact for the following reason. Although the notion of, and the names attached to the three sub-groups are a result of naturalistic observations, the differentiation of worshipers into named sub-groups is merely an analytical tool. From the standpoint of the researcher, the tools help organize data so that it may be presented to the reader in an understandable form. Many of the minister's strategies are based upon him making similar analytical distinctions between various types of worshipers within the church. But, in certain situations the various types of worshipers become one group and are treated as such. Undoubtedly there are many such situations, but for reasons of time and space, we will only deal with two of the most visible. Since social action is not always oriented around the chosen analytical categories, a view of worshipers as a whole gives us some insights into the complexity of human behavior and the difficulties which accompany the study of it.

A. "The White Folk's Clock"

Sunday morning worship service is a spontaneous event filled with a variety of action. During the two-and-

a-half hour worship event it is possible for the most enthusiastic to become so engrossed in the excitement of the moment that all notions of time are dissolved. Yet, for many in the setting, time is an all important factor. Band members are interested in the timing of the worship service since many of them have plans to attend services later that afternoon. Either at St. Paul or elsewhere. Others are interested in "gettin out on time" since they too have made plans. For these others, the worship service is an event which should start on time and let out on time. Time is also an important factor for the many church workers involved in the coordination of the numerous dinners, musicals, fund drives, church visiting, and church hosting. Sunday service seldom begins on t-me; a fact which raises a considerable amount of criticism. During the unstructured period of time which lies between Sunday school and worship service, criticism reaches its height. It was the frustration of this waiting period that lead Sister McDougal to comment:

The service never gets to rollin on schedule. When white folks say eleven o'clock they mean eleven o'clock. Looks like colored folks just don't wants have church until the sun go down.

The factor of time may seem trivial but time and timing are of the essence. The churched, who like to "have church all day," also show concern over the movement from

Sunday school to worship service to Sunday afternoon musical programs to Sunday evening mission service. Delayed timing can arouse the impatience of the audience and thereby interfere with the ability to concentrate on the what is being said and done. Congregation members complain but in actuality they are the source of their own complaints. Events continually run behind schedule because church officials must wait for the appearance of a small audience before worship events can be initiated. In sum, congregational members show a desire to end services on time but are unwilling to show up at the designated time. Since almost every activity begins late, the minister often has to dispel the congregation's impatience. He does this by reminding them that they came to worship and not watch the clock.

Be patient with God . . . you can't rush my God. You just have to wait on Him. The Holy Spirit comes and goes when it gets ready. The Holy Spirit ain't like you and me, it don't follow white folks' clocks.

A serious effort to coordinate worship activities is important if the minister is to maintain a captive audience. He counteracts states of restlessness by trying to keep the congregation involved at all times. When the flow of the service breaks down, the minister may abruptly lead the congregation into a song or he will take time to address them in the fashion of an entertainer.



B. "Liftin the Offering"

The most disruptive span of time, and one which affects all worshipers, is the collection of offering. Officials, in carrying out the activity, treat the congregation as a unified whole. We will later see that the strategies accompanying the activity are not based upon subgroup distinctions.

Worshipers exhibiting all levels of religious commitment show concern over the amount of time spent on the collection of money. Some of the dissatisfaction finds its way to the church hierarchy. At one point, offering became such a heated issue that the minister announced an alternative method of collection.

Some members complained that most of our meetin time is spent beggin for pennies. When we finish beggin for pennies, we beg for more pennies. Members are complaining that money is killin the spirit. In order to keep the spirit in the church, money will be collected in a new way.

Unmistakably, this passage transmits the importance of timing in collecting the offering. It must be done in a rather quick manner in order to avoid alienating the congregation. The three, and sometimes four or more, offerings collected on a given Sunday morning amounts to a considerable expenditure of time. It also fosters a questioning of the church's emphasis on money. Members are prone to verbalize their dissatisfaction and a variety of comments

can be heard above the jingling of the collection plates.

They rob you on the streets and they rob you  
in the church. Shit . . . they rob you  
everywhere you go.

Equating the collection of offering with robbery is no doubt an extreme reaction to "passing the plate." But it nevertheless reflects the hostility toward offering. At the other extreme would be band members who profess to, give cheerfully. But even for them, the numerous offerings affect the limited budgets they live on.

Lifting the offering demands a set of strategies which are directed at the congregation as a whole. A delicate balance must be maintained; since the revenue is necessary but cannot be collected properly if the "Spirit" is killed. The newly instituted method of collection was aimed at economizing on time. According to the rules of the new system, church members belonging to a club, an auxiliary, or the choirs were allowed to pay their tithes directly to the president of their organization. For members who belonged to no auxiliary or club, captains were appointed to whom they could pay their tithes. The new approach eliminated a considerable amount of walking to and from the collection table, and in the process, maintained the flow of the worship service.

The old method of collecting offering was not completely discarded (as the minister's disclosure would lead

one to believe). Instead of a totally "new" system, the minister had interwoven the traditional with the modern. The traditional method is the only approach in use on all occasions, with the exception of Sunday morning worship service. It is Sunday worship service where the blending of methods occurs. Church members give their contributions to captains (new) but non-members are still subjected to marching around the collection table (old).

Usher coordination is the key to the traditional method. They are responsible for controlling the tempo and flow of collections.<sup>17</sup> Full responsibility rests upon them as the church is "put in the hands of the ushers." Acting in concert with the ushers are musicians who play march-type pieces which add significantly to the congregation's movement. Joining with the ushers and musicians is the minister. He is able to implement usher control and the mood creation of musicians through his verbal skills. Ministers will typically initiate the giving exercise by using themselves as an example, and becoming the first contributor (i.e., by saying "I'll give two dollars to start things off").

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<sup>17</sup>Ushers station themselves at the front and back of the sections which house the congregation (on both sides of the church). The usher in the rear will direct the last row to file out and march forward to the collection table. Each row is emptied in this manner until the front row is emptied. Then, the same process is repeated on the other side. Ushers resemble traffic cops in that they direct and control the speed with which worshipers empty from their rows and file forward.

Once things have been started he then has the option to remind the congregation that the money doesn't go to him or to the church but to God and "blessed are those who give."

When offering is collected and quickly counted, the deacons frequently announce to the congregation that they are short of their goal. In such situations, the minister usually responds with a final plea.

The trouble wit folks today is that they want something for nothing. Some want water from the well without payin for the rope. If you want a new hog (cadillac) you have to get up off some dollars. Salvation is free . . .just like water is free. But, you have to pay to pipe it in. If you want a nice church building, you have to get up off some dollars. Very few things are free.

Final pleas are attempts at fusing religion with the giving of money. Armed with this tactic the minister is able to appeal to the religious sentiments of sincere worshipers. A final plea is sometimes anticipated by the congregation and the response that a clergyman receives depends largely upon his verbal skills. Verbal competence is crucial because many in the congregation are waiting to see how he'll go about collecting the needed amount.

Some ministers show little respect for an individual's preference to give or not to give. From the pulpit, they make use of psychological tactics which facilitate the extraction of money from the congregation. "Raising money in rounds" is an example. The technique requires the

minister to assume firm control over the entire congregation. Once this is achieved, he is free to begin the collection of offering.

All of those willing to give five dollars, stand please. [He pauses and looks around the room. Congregation members do the same.] All those willing to give three or four dollars, stand please. [Again he and the audience glance about the room, examining those who stand, and those who do not.] Those that will give one dollar, stand [pause and glances]. Those are goin' out of style. You can't buy nothin' for a dollar these days. Those giving any kind of offering at all, please stand [pauses and glances].

By having persons stand in accordance with the amount of their donation, the minister is allowing each individual to receive social praise for his contribution. At the end, when he tells anyone giving anything at all to stand, he is putting social pressure on those few who have the nerve to remain seated. He is playing upon the relationship between giving and the public stigma that goes along with it.

Another technique, in the lifting of offering, also revolves around the use of social pressures. In this approach the minister makes a public donation, he then challenges the deacons of the church to "give some folding money." The deacons, when publically challenged, donate not as individuals but as the "Deacon Board." Their donation is publically announced and a snowball effect begins to take

shape. Following the Deacon Board, the two choirs, the musicians, the Trustee Board, and the Mother's Board are liable to make contributions. The minister has succeeded in drawing organizations, and not individuals, into the ritual of giving money. Each organization expends its energies and resources trying to "outdo" their counterparts. Once the clubs and auxiliaries have completed giving their donations, members of the congregation are asked to contribute. The total sum is announced not in terms of individual clubs but on the basis of what "we have raised." However, the auxiliary contributing the most is singled out and receives formal recognition from both the minister and the congregation.

A final technique in the lifting of offering is the publication of a program containing an individual's name and the amount of his (her) contributions for the month. Social pressures and public recognition also play a part here. To increase social pressures, the names of those who don't contribute anything at all are printed along with those of the contributors. The end of the month finds worshipers busily examining the print in search of their names and the names of others. The importance of the printing of one's name and the correct donation is an issue which continually plagues the minister and the committee responsible for the publication. For the sum of a worshiper's contributions,

over an extended period of time, is a basis for the allocation of status. Status having little to do with religion.

### Dependency of the Band on the Environmental Sectors

Whether or not the church is able to provide mechanisms, which allow band members to attain their goals, without having to rely on resources found in its' environmental sectors is a difficult question to answer. The difficulty is in discussing church-environmental relations without moving into material to be presented in following chapters. The next three chapters (i.e. Relation to Other Religious Bodies, Relation to the Black Community, the Metro Environment) will relate the church to its environment and in doing so will touch upon what the sectors contribute to the realization of the means-ends scheme of band members. Here, the aim is to present a rough outline of the church's relation to environmental sectors and its significance for band members. The outline will take on greater meaning as the reader progresses through the next three chapters (i.e., as will our prior discussions of the shouters dependence on environmental sectors and the dependency of action seekers).

#### A. Other Religious Bodies

Band members, in accordance with the church covenant,

as a means to their ends, and to maintain the financial stability of the church, are highly dependent on ties with their co-religionists. Ties with other religious bodies are necessary if band members are actively striving to maintain a religious existence. Fellowship, the act of involving Christians from other churches in one's religious life, requires band members to plan a variety of religious and quasi-religious activities with other religious bodies.

#### B. The Black Community

Band members are also dependent on the establishment of relationships between the church and the black community. To carry out their belief in evangelism, they must have an audience to spread the word too, and to continue the growth of the organization a source of new recruits is of some importance. We shall later see how structural processes such as the "announcement of visitors" and "open church" are parts of the worship service that connect St. Paul to the black community.

#### C. The Metro Environment

Finally we will see the lack of contact between the church and the metro environment. The lack of contact is significant within itself. The significance lies in the degree of virtual independence band members (and other sub-groups) have from the metro environment. Like the shouters



and action seekers, band members find resources of goal attainment without relying on greater metropolitan Omaha. The result is a great deal of autonomy from bodies and organizational forms found in the dominant culture. The absence of formalized connections between church and metro-area does not mean that band members are totally divorced from the dominant culture, however. Individual band members have been unsuccessful at living in the world but not of the world. Failure in this endeavor has meant increasing interactions with the black community and in the metropolitan area. The believers no doubt feel the social psychological impact of the dominant culture. The ultimate ends of seeking help in a troubled world and heaven cannot be divorced from the nature of the relationship between worshipers and the "white folks downtown."

## CHAPTER V

### RELATIONS TO OTHER RELIGIOUS BODIES: "FELLOWSHIP"

Black clergymen are entrepreneurs engaged in one of the most stable industries in the black community. North Omaha has between seventy and eighty-five black churches with more than one-third of them belonging to the Baptist denomination.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to say whether or not the area is over-churched; such a judgment is, at best, subjective. However, it is safe to say that churches are a significant form of social organization in North Omaha and as businesses, they must compete with one another for a market. We suspect this competitive situation to be true, not only in North Omaha, but in other black communities throughout the country. Social researchers have commented on the numerical strength of the Black Church as early as 1933. Mays and Nicholson described the quantitative aspects of the institution by saying, "economically the Negro is

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<sup>1</sup>Exact figures were difficult to arrive at. Churches were counted by in the field enumeration, examination of phone directories, and by attempting to ascertain statistical information from representative churches of each denomination. The existence of "house-churches" and "store-front" made it impossible to count all churches. The cited figures were the estimates of the inter-denominational Ministerial Alliance.

unable to adequately support so many enterprises doing essentially the same thing."<sup>2</sup>

Historically, scholars have traced the rise of the Black Church and its subsequent multiplication to continued enforcement of social constraints imposed on the black community by the dominant culture. Segregation and racial prejudice have necessitated the development of black religious institutions. The existence of segregation means that the clergy, in their role as entrepreneurs, need not compete with their white counterparts. Competition is then centered in the black community. The number of competing churches is regulated chiefly by the structural organization of various denominations. Denominations whose governing body adheres to the "Episcopal" model of organization are subjected to a hierarchical chain of authority. The seats of authority control the development of new churches, the assignment of clergymen, and in many cases the state by state coordination of church affairs. Similar to this is the "synod" model whereby church growth and the flow of ministers is decided by a Senate.<sup>3</sup> The baptist denomination differs from the

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<sup>2</sup>Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, The Negro's Church (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933).

<sup>3</sup>The aim here is not to fully explore the differences among the organizational styles of religious denominations.

above two models and in doing so introduces peculiarities which complicate the sanctioning of new churches and the regulating of already established ones. Baptists are organized on the basis of what Paul Harrison has termed, a "free church tradition."

For more than a century the Baptists have emphasized the freedom of the individual in all matters of faith and practice. In addition, they have insisted upon the autonomy of the local church and the freedom of the congregation to govern its own affairs apart from the direction of church councils or associations of churches.<sup>4</sup>

The tradition exemplifies the congregation as the primary organizational form and the minister as the representative authority. The fact that anyone who feels the "call" can preach, the notion that four is enough to constitute a church; and the absence of a centralized ecclesiastical structure has increased the appeal that the Baptist church has had for blacks.<sup>5</sup>

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(Cont.) Instead, we wish to make known differences which set the Baptist apart. For those with a deeper interest see, Paul Harrison, Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959).

<sup>4</sup>Paul Harrison, ibid.

<sup>5</sup>For further discussion of these possibilities see Marshall Stearns, The Story of Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955). Stearns gives mention to the chance for blacks to form their own religious institution without being sanctioned by the dominant culture. The church has served as a channel for upward mobility as well. Stearns

The peculiarities of the Baptist church means that a given church must not only compete with other denominations but must also engage in an intra-denominational struggle, with other Baptist churches of substantial size, for a portion of the market. In the absence of a centralized ecclesiastical structure, St. Paul and other baptist enterprises must develop ways of dealing with the presence of a large number of churches in a restricted market. The market is restricted in that not all worshipers have a preference for the Baptist church. Those that do are further diluted when they are spread among the thirty or so baptist churches of North Omaha. The subject of this chapter, then, is how the church relates to other religious bodies in a context of heavy supply and limited demand for religion. Yet, despite the competition the church has established an informal connectional system with other Baptist churches. The social arrangements enhance rather than impede the functioning of the church.

To carry out the religious business of the church, St. Paul's covenant holds that its members must build a congregation that is capable of entering into relationships with their religious fellows "as one body in Christ."

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(Cont.) also feels that the Baptist church paralleled West African religions in freedom of religious expressions.

Extended relationships are possible only after a church has put its own house in order. Once having done so, through much church work, by sustaining a relatively fixed clientele, and the acquiring of adequate economic support from them, the church is ready to establish social relations with other churches. Relations with other religious bodies is referred to, by St. Paul's congregation, as "fellowship." Fellowship is responsible for not only forming relations (with other churches) on a religious dimension but on economic and social dimensions as well. Latter portions of this chapter will be devoted to the economic and social relationship which have grown out of intra-congregational ties. Our concern at this point is with the religious aspects of fellowship.

### Cooperative Relations on the Religious Dimension

#### A. "Fellowship"

Fellowshp, as stated in St. Paul's covenant, is an extension of the religious duties that each church must carry out on an individual level. The portion of the document which discusses this responsibility reads as follows:

We moreover engage that, we will as soon as possible remove from this place, and unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of the covenant and the principles of God's word.

By reading the above passage one is able to infer what is meant by fellowship. Briefly put, it is a conscious effort at expanding church membership into the intra-organizational realm. The act is carried out by informal processes which include personal friendships which stretch across institutional boundaries, the initiation of relations on the basis of a church's and/or its minister's reputation, and through a procedure which involves business ties between ministers. The intended outcome is the emergence of an ideal situation in which religion will be deemed more important than the competition being waged for potential worshipers. In other words, fellowship is aimed at destroying the idea of many separate baptist churches. In a message delivered during a joint worship service, Rev. Green spoke of Baptist unification and membership in one church.

As Baptists we all serve the same God,  
commit the same sins and must get on our  
knees in the same fashion to pray to our  
Savior. This ain't no segregated church,  
this is God's church.

Fellowship is a means by which each church is able to pursue spiritual unity in the absence of a strong ecclesiastical structure, and at the same time remedy the clientele situation. By virtue of informal association arising out of fellowship, St. Paul is able to not quite overcome but to live with the problems caused by the large number of baptist churches vying for a restricted market.

In sum, fellowship serves a dual function; the functions of collective worship supposedly devoid of institutional loyalties and economic sustenance. Relations with other religious bodies can be regarded as a virtual fusion of religion and economics.<sup>6</sup> The large number of Baptist churches has spread the market so thin until it is economically unfeasible for St. Paul to continue its functioning without access to that portion of the market which has been cornered by rival institutions.

B. Economic Fellowship: An Economic Aspect of Religious Relations

To gain access to the market cornered by rival institutions, the church has erected an informal, yet very effective, process of "visiting and hosting." Visiting implies, going to seek out fellowship and at the same time taking one's market along. We are using the word "market" in reference to the economic potential of a congregation. Hosting conversely involves the offering of fellowship and the receiving of a rival's market as a repayment for an earlier visit. The process works in the following way. St. Paul might take its congregation to another church to

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<sup>6</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, suggested that the Black Church was the place where some of the first economic exchanges took place among "freed Negroes." See, E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocker Books, 1963).



enhance the economics of that church and to help with the program (i.e., the choir might sing, ushers help control the crowd flow, and the minister might open the services with a prayer). Choirs appear on the program to support their musical counterparts. Their role aids the hosting choirs in their attempts at facilitating the means-ends of the various types of worshipers. Choir exchanges are important because they add a little depth to a church's musical program. In other words, visiting choirs are an added attraction for individuals (shouters) of the hosting church who enjoys the rhythmic aspects of music, feel it necessary to make a "joyful noise," or those who feel it a bound duty to "give honor and praise unto the Lord," by way of musical forms.

Reciprocal exchanges of ministerial services must be viewed from two perspectives. The position of the clergy and from a congregational vantage point. Ministers who bring the message to a host church increase the possibility of personal success by building a preaching reputation. They practice their chosen profession on a ready-made market. The collection taken up specifically for the visiting pastor is an additional source of income. Income derived not from his own congregation but from duties he performs for the host church. St. Paul pays the ministers salary and to this he is able to add revenue from delivering a

message or an opening prayer at hosting churches on a Sunday afternoon, a Sunday evening, or two or three times during the week. Visiting pastors resemble more than a religious man to the congregation. To them he is cast in a variety of roles from a bearer of God's word, to a type of visiting lecturer, to an entertainer. A good pastor, one who is well versed in the strategies of his trade and has his own unique style, is capable of drawing large crowds into a church. If the crowd is large and the minister performs well the congregation will respond favorably with a sizable offering.

We ask you to open your hearts as well as your pocketbooks so we can take up offering for the visitin minister. We got to give him enough to buy him a loaf of bread. A loaf used to cost a nickel but even that's gone up now.

Visitation is much like being in one's own church for the better the performance the larger the purse. For the host pastor, having a guest minister is a matter of sharing his market. An offering will be extracted from his congregation but this is compensated for in two ways. First, an offering is also collected for his church and the increased numbers brought into the church by visiting members is a welcome addition to the till. Secondly, the host pastor is relieved from having to work. Preliminary duties are handled by the assistant pastor and oftentimes the very arrangement he is enjoying has been established by those who

see working for the Lord as a virtue. So, hosting can be, in many ways, a day off for the head of the house. He too can enjoy the service rather than conduct it. Exchanges are a necessity and not only do they dissolve church differences but they cut across denominational boundaries as well.

I am glad to be here this evening. Here, in the house of the Lord. Your pastor and I are old friends, our relationship goes back. Way back! As you know I am not a Baptist, I am a holiness, filled with the livin' spirit of the Holy Ghost. Rev. Green and I don't let that stand in our way though. The last time he came to Faith Temple in Kansas City, he brought two buses and two cars full of members. We had a wonderful time . . . a wonderful time. I told him we'd come to St. Paul . . . It took a while but we finally made it.

The organization on the receiving end of the visit may not respond with a visit of their own for weeks, sometimes months. The important thing is that once the process is initiated the church on the receiving end has acquired an informal debt.

We of Greater New Hope Baptist Church are glad to have St. Paul with us tonight. They have come to us so many times when we needed them. Anytime we can be of any service call us. If you call us and if its the Lord's will . . . we'll be there. When you have your programs call on us and we'll try and answer the call. The Lord's line is never busy.

Delays in dissolving debts points out the ongoing nature of visiting and hosting. Even though the process is reciprocal it is not automatically activated but is subject

to negotiation. The process is liable to be re-initiated by invitation, i.e., at a point when the other church needs assistance.<sup>7</sup>

Whether or not St. Paul and other churches carry out the loose terms of informal agreements largely depends on the integrity of individual ministers. By and large, the carrying out of such agreements is considered both good business and an obligation that must be fulfilled. The inability to complete the terms of an agreement (i.e., the congregation might not be able to attend a given function when invited or the choir may have conflicting dates) is a matter of serious concern. If the church is unable to help the performance, or take its market to a hosting church, compensations are in order. Alternative plans of repayment usually come from the minister.

Since we are unable to go to Waterloo (Iowa), we will lift an offering to send to 'em. Those of you who won't be here this afternoon, we're askin' you to leave your financial aid so we can support them.

When Morning Star came to us it wasn't just fellowship . . . we needed the money to pay the bills. Its easy to ask churches to come but when it's turned around it's a different story.

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<sup>7</sup>For example, St. Paul visited Mt. Sinai in early October and performed duties which enhanced their "building fund." The debt was not paid until St. Paul was in need of choirs to fill their Easter program. Mt. Sinai was invited since, in the words of Deacon Clark, "we went over there and lent them a hand."

In some circumstances fellowship as a religious venture takes a back seat to the economic realities of life. Before fellowship becomes viable, the church must possess the monetary means to pay the pastor's salary, maintain a building fund, pay utilities, and buy church furniture, air conditioners, choir robes, musical instruments, and countless other items. In order to have fellowship, or any other type of worship event, they must have a church in which to hold services.

C. Joint "Baptism"

Baptism, for St. Paul, is a joint undertaking. Since the physical structure at St. Paul is endowed with the necessary facilities, it holds baptism exercises with four other churches. From the very beginning the ceremony is handled as if the five churches are one. Devotion is led by a mixture of deacons from each of the involved churches. From the moaning bench, each deacon delivers a rousing prayer as if he is in front of his own congregation. Like devotion, the physical part of baptism is handled by visiting ministers. Thus one minister, who is not a member of St. Paul, baptizes the entire list of candidates. The other clergymen play a supportive role as they become a chorus which rivals the deacons in their call and response patterns. Members of the audience, regardless of their affiliations

with the participating churches, become a unified audience. As a consolidated entity, they participate in the baptism by collectively singing, "take me to the water, take me to the water, oh take me to the water and baptize me." This verse is augmented by another as each candidate is submerged in the water. This time the congregation launches into several lines of, "None but the righteous, none but the righteous, Oh, none but the righteous shall see God."

Competition is suspended among the participating parties during the induction ceremony. The suspension of rivalries enables the five churches to baptize all new recruits without any thought being given to the church which they have pledged their membership. The premise behind joint baptism is the same as the assumption which characterizes the ideal state of fellowship. That is, candidates are baptized into the Christian church instead of being inducted into Mt. Sinai, Mt. Olivet or the other three members of the five-some. The joint use of facilities, the baptism of all candidates by a single minister, the delegation of duties on the basis of a representative from each church, and a congregation which momentarily believes that church individualism is a myth, are all indicators of the cooperative spirit in joint baptisms.

Competition can be suspended during baptism since candidates have not yet become fully qualified members of

the market. The act of baptism is a prerequisite to market membership because the ceremony means that a candidate is eligible to select the church of his choice. Where he is baptized, and who baptizes him is of little significance. The important thing is that an individual washes away his sins and is then reborn into "the church." We say "the church" meaning the Baptist church. Once an individual has completed the ceremony of baptism, he becomes a permanent part of the market. As a part of the Baptist market, he is then free to become a member of a church. If membership in his chosen church is not satisfactory, he has the right to resign and become a member of another Baptist church by virtue of a "written letter" or through "previous Christian experience." The freedom of movement from one church to another is all made possible by baptism. A church might lose a member if she decides to end her affiliation but the loose structure for becoming a member in another Baptist organization and the economics associated with visiting and hosting make it possible for churches to contain the market. If a member strays from church to church, as many do, it is still possible to periodically enlist his support via the visiting and hosting process. Theoretically, the lessened numbers in a church are not so important if those who have "fallen away" become active in another of Omaha's Baptist churches.

Baptism is not a situation in which markets are

shared. It can best be described as a joint cultivation of a long-time market. One reason markets which each church has already cornered are not shared is that they do not come as churches. Earlier we alluded to the oneness of the audiences at baptism. We wish to make a final comment on this.

Though entire congregations are notified of baptisms, they are most likely to come on an individual basis. The affair is a religious one but the tone is different from worship services. Many who come, come to witness what they feel is an important event in the life of their youngster; an event that is like a wedding or graduation exercise in that "it happens only once in a lifetime." Consistent with this view is the churches' conception of the event. The church interprets it as a service which it performs for the families whose sons and daughters are candidates; the service comes complete with a framed certificate bearing the names of the candidate and presiding minister, date of baptism, and the church where the ceremony was held.

#### D. "Revival"

Revival is a combination of fellowship and evangelism. The latter component is present in the event insofar as its intended purpose is to "save the sinners," "reclaim the backsliders," and "revive Christians." Evangelism is



interwound with fellowship in that the reviving of Christians is directed at both the hosting and visiting churches. Week-long revivals are a church's way of bringing new members into the church and subsequently increasing the market through converting sinners, gaining an accurate account of the actual size of a market by reclaiming those members of the market whose participation moves back and forth between the church and the exterior world, and reaffirming the loyalties of persons who have become stable church clietnele as a result of their belief in Christ. Revival, although involving reciprocity, contains a momentary suspension of competition as well.

I am grateful for your presence here this evening. This is not just a revival for St. Paul but a revival for the City of Omaha. If you're out of the church, you can come tonight and join any church. It doesn't have to be St. Pau. This is revival week and we want the word spread all over Omaha. The custom is to go tell it. Go tell it all over Omaha.

Efforts at increasing the market is billed as a metropolitan affair but ends up being an event which includes St. Paul and a small group of visiting churches. If anyone goes and tells it, their evangelizing is apparently limited to the ministers and congregations of participating churches for no active efforts at metropolitan advertisement is made. The basis of exchange is again choirs and congregations. But there is a new twist this time. Revenue

from the separate markets goes to the host church and a traveling evangelist. The local ministers present, usually six to eight, receive no financial reward for their participation. Although they help with the program by introducing the visiting evangelist, leading prayers, and reading scriptures each local minister is cast in a different role. Instead of directing the flow of the service from the pulpit as they are all accustomed to doing, they play a supportive role which they probably became proficient at during their earlier years as deacons. It is not uncommon for the evangelist to praise his counterparts for their input.

We want to thank the many fine ministers her tonight (at St. Paul). Without their support and power we wouldn't be able to make it. All of them know that I can't preach without their help.

With all of the ministers cast in a supportive role and the host church only benefiting from collections, it seems that the ministers and their congregations are sharing their market with the evangelist while receiving nothing in return. To understand fully the dynamics of revival one must focus on the visiting evangelist and the rewards he is able to extract from the various markets which accompany each respective clergyman. Focusing on the evangelist will not give the reader a description of revival as an occasion but rather a description of the benefits accruing principally to the evangelist-visitor through exchanges with other

ministers and congregations. We wish the reader to be aware that not all evangelists are as "dynamic" as the few who visited St. Paul. Like all other businesses, the religious enterprise is filled with individuals who possess differing amounts of talent. If a minister has the talent, events like revival are a boon to his occupational aspirations.

A traveling evangelist typically takes to the road about once a year for a one month period. His travel route is determined by informal contacts with other ministers he has met while preaching, by relationships established at various Baptist conventions at the state or local level, and by others who have an awareness of his reputation. Once the evangelist visits a church he relies on his individual merits to establish reciprocal relationships with other ministers. The first exchange takes place between the host minister and the evangelist. In return for sharing his market and inviting others to do the same, the evangelist and the host minister usually agree to an informal contract in which the host will become an evangelist and the evangelist the host. That is to say, the host minister will, in the future, run a revival at the church of the visiting evangelist. He will then have access to the evangelists' market and to the market of visiting churches. Rev. Carter, a visiting evangelist, spoke of the reciprocity between church officials when he told St. Paul's congregation:

When Rev. Green comes to Texas we gonna treat him as good as yall treated me. It will take a month for St. Paul to get him back. We lookin' forward to havin' Rev. Green visit us. You have a great pastor here at St. Paul . . . a great pastor.

Along with the revenue extracted from the host minister's congregation, an evangelist is able to tap the visiting churches for additional resources. During the week he is in town, he is able to break away from revival to bring the message to a few of the visiting congregations. We have seen what the host minister and the evangelist exchange but have only implied what visiting ministers receive from a relationship which is supposedly reciprocal. Visiting ministers have the opportunity to establish the same kind of package deals that exists between host minister and the evangelist. If an individual does informally arrange such a package, it may be well worth it for his church and also in terms of his personal gains. The church benefits from a probable enrollment increase and acquires an added source of income. To demonstrate what is personally attainable, in terms of material items, we wish to discuss what a visiting evangelist is likely to receive from markets lying outside of his pulpit's jurisdiction.

A week's work, in many respects, resembles a vacation. At any rate, the nature of ministerial work and the possible rewards associated with it, are enough to fulfill

the aspirations of church officials who are in the religious field as a route to upward mobility. It would seem that the young black minister is, in a number of ways, the counterpart to the young aspiring American entrepreneurs. The church affords him opportunities that many are unable to benefit from. A case in point is the vacation atmosphere of an evangelist's road trips. Revivals are a mixture of business and leisure. Reciprocities entered into with hosting and visiting ministers are mixed with an all expense paid week of socializing. Food and lodging are provided either by fellow ministers or by members of the congregation. An evangelist is treated as a celebrity, entertained, and receives a variety of gifts from members of the hosting church.

In addition to transportation to the city and then back home or to the next city on his tour, evangelists received other fringe benefits. Included in these were between \$275 and \$350, and undisclosed additional sum of money collected nightly in brown envelopes, and a new set of clothing (i.e., socks, shoes, underwear, a complete suit with trousers and a coat, neckties, shirts, handkerchiefs, cufflinks, and a wristwatch). Not only are these items provided by the congregation but they take pride in their ability to cloth a visiting evangelist and in the public presentation of said gifts. All of the fringe benefits,

plus the business part of revival, makes for a profitable week's work.

A month of evangelizing, when combined with the routine duties of a minister, are not enough to make a pastor wealthy but they clearly allow for a certain level of comfort. A level of comfort which is beyond the means of the average black man. Members of the Baptist pulpit acquire and maintain their standard of living by sharing the market with one another. A literal interpretation is that their level of comfort exceeds that of their clienteles. But as we stated earlier, reciprocity benefits the organizations engaged in exchange; it benefits both institutions and the business aspirations of individual ministers even though proving expensive to consumers.

### Competitive Relations on the Social Dimension

#### A. Social Fellowship

Visiting and hosting is somewhat of a social occasion for the churches involved. Publically, both churches try to instill in their congregation the idea of collective worship. Despite such proclamations the parties involved in fellowship activities retain their church loyalties. When visiting or hosting another church, St. Paul's congregation exhibits the we'ness that distinguishes them from other churches. They

worship with other churches but do not completely surrender their pride for their church home. The minister, while speaking of religious fellowship on one hand, often speaks of church pride on the other.

Don't make me shame now. When we serve as host for these churches, I want to see the membership of this church in attendance. You wouldn't invite a guest to your home . . . and not be there to receive them would you? I hope you don't make me shame. If just the pastor and choir show up it looks a little bad.

The members of St. Paul are on their best behavior when visiting or hosting another church. Visiting is going somewhere as a Baptist, yet as a representative of St. Paul. St. Paul's choirs, when on a program with a visiting or hosting church, must do more than sing, they must sing their best. Displaying the talent of the choir is one example of the subtle rivalry which is a part of fellowship. All choirs on the program are accompanied by a group of well wishers who function in the capacity of cheer leaders. Church pride becomes obvious as they spur and cheer on the performance of their respective choirs.

In situations involving only two churches, the Usher Board of St. Paul participates in worship services sponsored by a hosting church. Like the choir, ushers are on display. Of importance to them is the smoothness with which they carry out their duties. It is a time when they employ a full

range of hand signals, are uniformly dressed, and responsibilities are carried out with drill team precision. Lifting an offering also requires St. Paul to put forth its best effort. Just as the minister instructs his congregation on attendance, he also warns members not to embarrass him during the passing of the collection plate. All church members are urged to "give folding money." A great deal of pride is taken in the amount of money a visiting church helps its host to raise. With this in mind, the collection of offering is sometimes begun by a brief, "come on now St. Paul," type of pep talk. Offering ends up to be a contest between churches who have come together in divine fellowship. Each church strives to impress the other and an announcement of the total offering brings a multitude of Amens as the mixed congregation applauds its achievement. The amount of the offering is announced as a single sum but officials from St. Paul keep the competitive spirit going by periodically cautioning their membership to give.

A fourth item, the minister, can be added to the choirs, the Usher Board, and offering as a symbol of St. Paul's pride. The cheer leaders who pull for the choir are also there to support the minister. In a strange church, the congregation making the journey with the minister constitutes a small crowd that is familiar with his preaching style. They serve as his background while the deacons of



St. Paul serve as his source of preaching power.

Deacon Hadicks, Deacon Powell, y'all come on up hear. You, too Brother Clark. When a fellow sits so far back he's nearly out of the church. I need some help up here. You gives me help.

The minister needs a familiar group of worshipers to support what he is attempting to get across in his message. Church deacons, and others, respond in a most encouraging way when visiting another church. An enthusiastic sermon and the highly supportive call-and-response patterns are not so much an expression of a heightened sense of religiosity but are an expression of the competition which exists between visitor and host. For the minister is a reflection upon the church which he leads. A skilled clergyman is, to most congregations, something to boast about. On the business end of the matter, the better the message the greater the chance that the visiting and hosting processes will continue beyond the fulfillment of the initial obligation.

The last few paragraphs have dealt with the competitive aspect of social fellowship. One might venture as far as to say that there is a sharp difference between the ideal and the real. The ideal is the thought of one church worshiping in divine fellowship. An important factor of the ideal is the absence of church loyalties. At the other end of the spectrum is the real. Despite claims of being one

church, fellowship is characterized by a variety of inter-organizational social competition. The competition is positive since it enhances the worship activities of the hosting church. Furthermore, we suspect that there is a direct correlation between an inspired worship service and the size of the collection plate.

### Cooperative Relations on a Social Dimension

Although St. Paul seldom participates in relations with other religious bodies which are devoid of social competition, there are joint events where church consciousness is minimal. These events are cooperative affairs and come close to actualizing the idealized concept of fellowship. Church anniversaries and musical programs constitute a non-competitive structure within the social dimension of relations to the religious environment.

#### A. Church Anniversaries

Church anniversaries -- the anniversary of the minister who heads a given church -- are remarkably free from the economic concerns which are a familiar part of visiting and hosting. Usually, anniversary programs are a narrative of an individual church's history. Other churches are invited to "witness" and participate in a program which includes the bringing of the message, singing, biographical

sketches of the churches evolution and its pastors, the reading of essays and poems by church members, and the honoring of church workers. The progression from house church to main line type of church building (with a period of time being spent in a store front as the congregation moved from one extreme to the other) is a symbol of congregational pride. Pride in what the congregation has built from scratch is verbalized throughout anniversary programs and it not only affects the membership of a church but visiting worshipers also marvel at and honor those "who have worked so hard for the Lord." Honoring those who serve the church relates to the goals of band members. A statement by Sister Richardson shows the religious connotations associated with church work as it is evaluated during anniversaries.

For eighteen years we toiled to build this congregation. We toiled not in the name of John or Isaiah or Matthew but in the name of Jesus. Jesus has led us through dark times for Jesus is Jesus by himself.

Anniversaries bring together friends of the church. Friends are invited so they may take part in the "joyous occasion." The inclusion of outsiders is not surprising if we examine the qualifications for friendship among churches. Close relationships among churches are the end product of years of reciprocal arrangements. So, churches that become an integral part of anniversary celebrations have earned the

right to participate as a result of their many years of supporting the celebrating church. Visiting churches are a part of the celebration because they have played a peripheral role in the growth of the church. So close are the ties with some churches that a few have become a "second church home" for the members of St. Paul.

Visiting churches play a central role in a program consisting of looking forward as well as backwards. Praise for the hosting church is part of the testimony given by ministers and other officials who have worked closely with the sponsoring church. All parties participate in paying honor where honor is due. For instance, pulpit duties are assumed by a visiting minister. His control of the forum releases the host minister from his duties so that he may receive recognition for his service. The entire event is reminiscent of fathers day since another church comes into one's church home, releases officials from their duties, and pays them honor while they sit back and momentarily enjoy what they have built.

#### B. Musical Programs

Musical programs are another example of the willing suspension of competition among rival churches. Such programs, although being sponsored by a single church, draws

an audience from a wide variety of churches.<sup>8</sup> A diversified audience is partially due to the appearance of various musical groups whose performers have membership in separate churches. The focus of attention is not on individual churches nor is it centered on economic matters. All participants have put their individual church identities aside and have become a single unified audience. They are there in a leisure capacity with intents of enjoying themselves. Church members participate in musical programs mostly by hand clapping and foot shuffling and since performing groups do not represent a named church, there are limited opportunities for audience participation. Musical groups further destroy social competition among churches by pushing their group identity instead of their religious affiliation.

The host church lifts an offering from the diversified audience but all monetary contributions are solely for expenses incurred by the musicians. Donating to the musicians is strictly a voluntary affair. If an individual especially appreciates the skills displayed by the artists, he is at liberty to respond in any manner that he feels is appropriate.

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<sup>8</sup>In this particular section the concern is with discussing musical programs in relation to cooperative behavior among churches. For a further discussion and description of the affairs the reader is directed to the following chapter.

Musical programs provide a relaxing atmosphere where one is able to forget church business and the working evangelists who so diligently "beg for pennies." There is little in these events that resembles the well-structured worship service (i.e., the minister is absent and programs are coordinated by musicians). The absence of a well-defined structure permits participants to identify themselves more as an audience than as separate groups belonging to this or that church. Likewise, the musicians treated them in a corresponding fashion. The relaxed quality of the programs are exemplified in the announcements made to the audience.

The youth choir of Mt. Olive Baptist Church will sponsor a style-show at the church on Feb. 20, 1974. The show is open to all participants, those wishing to participate, may sign up with any member of the youth choir. The program is being sponsored so we can raise \$100 for our youth program here at Mt. Olive. We raised \$40 this morning and we want to raise \$60 to make it an even \$100.

It is here that one receives the strongest indication that competition between rival churches has been suspended.

Musical programs serve as a forum from which rival churches can advertise events being sponsored by their organization. The open forum serves as a type of verbal bulletin board for the church community. However, the suspension of competition is momentary for the thrust of most announcements have to do with meeting financial goals through the hosting process.

The forum at the end of musical programs is also

taken as an opportunity to organize members from the various churches for cooperative collective endeavors. Endeavors which are devoid of gains by any of the involved parties. Organizing individuals from competing churches is demonstrated by a member of a gospel group as she made the following announcement during one of St. Paul's Sunday afternoon musical programs.

The Soul Singers (the speaker is a member) are sponsoring a trip to East St. Louis, Missouri on March 24th. Anyone who is interested may contact myself or any member of the Soul Singers. We will charter buses for those wishing to go. Round trip ticket is \$23. The more we get to go the better the rates are. We will represent the City of Omaha . . . this is the city we are from.

Such an offer is beneficial to all interested parties. By suspending competition and engaging in cooperative activities the churches make it possible for individual participants to enjoy a weekend vacation at a price that everyone is able to afford. The many separate churches, in situations involving travel, lose their identities and take on a collective image. The church requires little from participants and in many instances participants are able to draw some satisfaction from the arrangement.

#### Conclusion

St. Paul's connection with other congregations serves two functions. It allows them to engage in joint worship with one another and thus satisfy their need for fellowship.

Also, the engendered relationships are a matter of economic sustenance for the church and for the minister. Economic sustenance is made possible by instances of reciprocity and the suspension of competition which characterize the process of "visiting" and "hosting." Focusing upon these characteristics tends to make one forget the one key prerequisite which must be actualized before either fellowship or economic sustenance is realizable. The prerequisite is of course quite obvious. But, in the sociological enterprise, the obvious is repeatedly overlooked. The obvious, in this instance, refers to the foundation of any organization--its recruits. To engage in reciprocity, the church must continuously revitalize itself by incorporating new members. The next chapter expounds on both the sources of recruitment and the structural processes used to carry out the enlistment of members.



## CHAPTER VI

### RELATION TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY: "MISSION"

We glad to have you here this morning.  
Where else can you enjoy good music, get  
a coke and hot fish sandwich, and worship  
the Lord?

The organizational structure of the church is shaped and modified by the social environment with which it interacts. We will see, in the next chapter, how interaction with the metropolitan environment results in structural differentiation. On another level, interaction between St. Paul and other religious bodies is responsible for an economic interpretation being added to the Christian tenant of fellowship. The church's efforts at drawing a clientele from the black community, and the large number of non-religious institutions it must compete with, have an effect on what the church offers to prospective clients. To carry out its recruitment responsibilities, the organization must produce something useful or acceptable to at least a part of the black community if it is to win continued support.

St. Paul presents, to prospective clients, a wide array of events which meet the needs of persons with a range of interests, talents, and aspirations. It offers, in the

form of Wednesday night prayer meetings, mission, and worship service, events having religious significance. These happenings provide an opportunity for individual religious men to seek out, to practice, and to express their religious convictions to the deity and in the presence of one's co-religionists. Other functions are quasi-religious; they incorporate diversified parts of secular life into the structure of the church, such as entertainment programs, educational classes, church dinners, and chances for travel. Quasi-religious functions reproduce on a miniature scale some of the activities which members of the black community are unable to individually pursue in the society as a whole. Social, political, and economic constraints make it nearly impossible for St. Paul's members to pursue certain quasi-religious goals beyond the black community. Within the black community, the limited availability of resources, leaves the church in a position of social importance. Perhaps more important than anything else, the church affords an opportunity for community persons to participate.

The desire to participate, and the chances made available by the church to do so, accounts for much of St. Paul's organizational stability. St. Paul, in other words, provides work opportunities for its membership. Work opportunities are crucial to the maintenance of the church but serve another purpose as well. They are related

to the amount of status allocated to church members. Though the organization receives an economic uplift, the involvement of individuals in work-related activities has religious and social dimensions to it. Church work, as a means of working out one's soul salvation, was discussed in Chapter IV; at this time our attentions will focus on the social functions of working for the church.

#### Social consequences of Church Work

This section will give much attention to competition and cooperation within the church in the context of activities that give status to various positions. The concern with status within the church is felt to be related to conditions in the black community that operate to elevate the church to somewhat of a voluntary association. The church is filled with boards and auxiliaries, each carrying a host of titles and differing degrees of status.<sup>1</sup>

Auxiliaries and the numerous church boards are responsible for sponsoring church events, such as revivals, dinners, fashion shows, and rallies, all to raise money for

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<sup>1</sup>Drake and Cayton, as well as Gunnar Myrdal in his American Dilemma, agree with Frazier (The Negro Church in America) that the church is an important factor in the social life of the black community.

the church. Overseeing the economic end of club work is the minister. He works with each auxiliary by serving as an advisor to the president. In this role we see the minister as a "boss" in that he coordinates the work of auxiliaries, informs them of the church's needs and how a particular club can best help, and at times he assigns new members in areas where they've had previous experience or where there is a number of unfilled vacancies. From this vantage point, the pastor is able to oversee the business end of the church. We refer to it as the business end because auxiliaries play a central role in St. Paul's relations with other religious bodies. Each auxiliary is the initiator of contact with other churches, the host, and the coordinator of whatever they are sponsoring. If we examine a single event, a church anniversary for instance, we can better appreciate the delegation of responsibility to auxiliaries and the role played by the minister. The following is an example of the division of labor involved in putting together a "program."

Monday Night - Guest church: St. Mark Baptist Church, Rev. L.D. Clemens, Pastor. Auxiliary in charge - St. Paul Baptist Church Mission Board.

Tuesday Night - Guest church: Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, Rev. E. Robinson, Pastor. Auxiliary in charge - St. Paul Baptist Church Usher Board.

Talk - Sister E. Baskin

Welcome - Brother Terry Gunter.

Wednesday Night - Guest church: New Hope Baptist Church, Rev. J.E. Kelly, Pastor. Auxiliary in charge - St. Paul Baptist Church Sunday School.  
Talk - Sister S. Knowles  
Welcome - Sister B. Tilman.

Thursday Night - Guest church: Second Baptist Church, Rev. H. Steward, Pastor. Auxiliary in charge - St. Paul Baptist Church Choir.  
Talk - Sister M. Hawlin  
Welcome - Sister E. Rush.

Friday Night - Guest church: Lion Baptist Church, Rev. J. Allen, Pastor. Auxiliary in charge - St. Paul Baptist Church Deacon Board.  
Talk - Brother Kincade  
Welcome - Brother R. Powell.

In each situation the total responsibility of fitting together a night's program rests upon the shoulders of each respective auxiliary. Some clubs invest more time in their work; a factor which accounts for the unevenness in the quality of programs. The division of labor, while a necessary part in organizing programs, is also beneficial. It makes it feasible for large numbers to participate and more importantly it stimulates competition among auxiliaries. Competition gives individuals, and the auxiliary as a whole, a chance to demonstrate who can do most for the church. The minister and club presidents are continually fanning the flames of competition by enthusiastically announcing what a particular auxiliary has done for the church.

This is a wonderful club . . . they have been doing great work. They accomplished what they set out to do and that way to pay for the air-conditioner. I have here in my hand . . . a title to the air-conditioner. We of the

Eager Beaver Club are always working hard to help the church. We would like to leave this thought to the church and the rest of the auxiliaries. If everybody at St. Paul Church was just like me; . . . what kind of church would St. Paul be? Think about it.

Auxiliary competition is a positive influence on the amount of revenue taken in by the church. With each auxiliary challenging the rest, trying to outdo its rivals, and being applauded by the pastor, the club president and each member are socially recognized.

Conflict also has its negative points. The small membership of St. Paul and the large number of auxiliaries in the church, some of which are defunct, spreads thin the membership in each club. In most cases, individuals belong to more than one auxiliary and may, therefore, have conflicting loyalties. Exchanges between auxiliaries involve informal relations between the heads of each club. Such politics call for one auxiliary to approach one of its counterparts to ask their support in an ongoing or upcoming venture. The pattern of reciprocity is similar to that practiced between different churches. The receiving auxiliary will reciprocate by returning the support in the near future. Close relationships are developed among a few of the clubs even though they are in competition with one another. Reciprocity among auxiliaries is possible because

each club has a goal which pertains to the benefit of the church.

Individuals, because of their membership in an auxiliary, are able to attain status which is shared among the members of a "hard workin" club. Some persons, though they enjoy it, are not always satisfied with group affiliated status. When and if this situation occurs, the church provides opportunities for the pursuit of individual status. Club officers are honored in the presence of the entire congregation and they in turn communicate that the venture was a joint affair by introducing the remaining members of the auxiliary.

Social status is also a factor in the jockeying for the positions of "church mother" and deacon. Church "mothers" are in a prestigious position. They are the pillars on which the concept of a church home rest. Along with the deacons of the church, they command the respect of the congregation and the minister as well. If the minister is the father figure of the "church home," church mothers are an image of the strong dedicated woman of the house. Of the women in the setting, it is the "mothers" of the church who command the highest respect. Unlike deacons, who get an opportunity to address the audience during devotion, while lifting the offering, and on other occasions, church mothers receive much of their public notoriety from

countless hours of behind the scene work.

Church mothers, and others who sponsor events, engage in person-to-audience communication largely on matters pertaining to their work. Persons are able to put into verbal form the strength with which they are working for the church. In some cases, the poems, and speeches prepared for the occasion are a chance to acquire status through the uniqueness and cleverness of individual expression. In the visiting and hosting process the "welcoming" and brief "talk" provide excellent opportunities to display talent.

St. Paul's own missionary board is holding a bake sale at the home of Sister Wright. The money collected will be used to pay on church furniture. We all use the furniture but we don't wanta come out of our pockets. We wanta enjoy the bride without payin' the expenses. Don't get me started now cuase I am right and I know I am right! To pay for a bride we needs money. You can't have a church without money. Its' like a meal . . . you can have a little bacon, some coffee, and bakin' powder, but for the whole thing to come together you got to have flour. That's the way the bride is. You got to have the right stuff. You got to have money.

Amid the call and response of the congregation, this individual becomes the key actor in the setting. In this role, oratory skills can be demonstrated before an appreciative audience. Persons are free to speak pretty much as they wish as long as they succeed in advertising their functions. The better their expressiveness, the more attention is drawn to an upcoming event. Announcements are



more than announcements. Besides conveying a message to the congregation, many announcements are filled with a form of individual expressiveness that provides a small bit of entertainment for the attentive congregation. As in the case of the minister's sermon it's not always what's being said that's important but the fashion in which it is said.

The quest for individual status is probably no different from that found in any voluntary association. It sometimes becomes so intensive that persons break off relationships with one another, take sides and form small cliques, and institute a serious wave of ditch-digging and back-biting. In extreme cases, the quest for status overrides even the religious principles to which church members are supposedly dedicated. That is, in search of status individuals place themselves first and somehow forget that the position they are seeking is supposed to benefit the church and not them. When subtle rivalries are brought out into the public, one can better understand the importance placed on holding a position in the church. The following incident is an example of the public disclosure of an internal rivalry. The matter was handled during worship service and thereby demonstrate the freedom of speech which is an integral part of the Black Church.

Since the minister has selected a new committee [she pauses and begins to openly weep. As she does this, the entire

congregation becomes aware of her seriousness] with a chairman, a secretary, and treasurer, I am now resigning my office as President of the kitchen committee [at this point she weeps even louder and friends rush to her aid but she continues while wiping away the tears]. I am givin it up and the group you selected can just go ahead and take over [she then told the other members of her committee to stand and announced that they too were resigning].

The resignations were not accepted by the congregation and three or four church members intervened to persuade them to reconsider the matter. The increasing number drawn into the dispute, needless to say, disrupted the worship service and the church building was in turmoil. So disruptive were the proceedings that the pastor was brought from his study. Like a father does his children, he strode into the room, glanced about without uttering a word, walked through the unseated crowd, and took control over the congregation as he reached the pulpit, the seat of authority. From the wooden structure he cleared his throat and very briefly told the upset lady, "the new committee ain't botherin' your position and your group. This is not an intended part of the worship service and I wish we could continue with the service." So spoke the authority and on went the service.

"President of the kitchen" committee doesn't seem all that impressive a title. But within the context of the church setting it is enough to fight for. Conflict arose

because the minister had appointed a new committee responsible for coordinating "the feeding of the family" and the earlier appointed president of the kitchen felt that her duties and responsibilities were infringed upon.<sup>2</sup>

The incident was included in this chapter to demonstrate three of what the writer feels to be significant aspects of the Black Church. First, status resulting from holding a position in the church is important, if not among the community at large, it is most certainly important to the church. Public displays of rivalry on touch upon the fervor occurring behind the scenes, but the actions taken are an indicator of the importance of the quest for status.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the incident is an excellent example of the power that the pulpit has and more specifically the power of the minister. Thirdly, the status incident, along with making

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<sup>2</sup>"Feeding the family" is a gathering of friends and relatives after funeral services of the deceased. The church has the responsibility of coordinating a super-type of arrangement; whereby, members of the congregation bring food. The kitchen committee was to organize these events. They were also responsible for managing the church's dining area and cooking facilities.

<sup>3</sup>Collecting data on rivalries between auxiliaries present certain methodological difficulties. For one, the "back-biting" and "ditch-digging" associated with competition are contrary to Christian tenants. As a result, the researcher must be only close terms with the participants. It is an extremely difficulty for a male researcher to penetrate the network of relationships.

the utility problem into an incident and the strategy employed in the shooting incident (see Chapters VII and VIII, respectively) show how negative happenings are used in a positive way. The status incident, although abruptly halted, was integrated into the following Sunday's Sunday school lesson. The lesson, entitled "Temperance," was used to issue a word of warning to the small group. The warning was directed at calling the congregation's attention to proper Christian behavior as it relates to a loose tongue. The deacon's message said nothing about the social science concept of status seeking but commented on the harm the incident caused the church. Christians, in the opinion of band members, do not engage in individualism and suppress their reward aspirations for the good of the church. To stress this point, Deacon Powell incorporated the incident into the social teachings of the church.

One should not jump up in a church-full of people. Christians will take their problems and discuss 'em in private. If we jump up and raise sand amongst ourselves, how we gonna gain folks from outside. If Christians can't get along with themselves they can't get along with anybody else. The lesson says, "let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear."

The hostilities generated by this incident were severe enough to warrant the selection of "Temperance" as a Sunday school lesson. It demonstrates the importance of

status functions as part of what the church offers clients drawn from low-income communities.

Recruitment from a Sub-Sector of the  
Black Community: the Neighborhood

"Up and Down the Beat"

Mission refers to the evangelizing of inhabitants of a sub-sector of the black community. That sub-sector is the immediate neighborhood surrounding the church which is comprised of North 24th Street and an adjacent low-rent, public housing complex. The area is characterized by a highly diversified business structure featuring a number of goods and service businesses, jitney stands, liquor stores, barber shops, pool halls, cafes, men's social clubs, and three or four "crap houses."<sup>4</sup> Joining in a reciprocal relationship with these business organizations is an intricate pattern of street life. Typical activities of the street range from the childish play of neighborhood children to alcoholics hustling among themselves for another bottle of "T-bird" to the economic activities of lower echelon drug

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<sup>4</sup>"Jitney's" are unlicensed taxi cabs. Persons drive jitney to earn extra money. Many times the driver has face-to-face relationships with customers. Drivers are plentiful as taxi service doesn't operate in the area for fear of violence.

dealers.

For alcoholics, drug pushers, and other street people, street corners are a place to go. A place with a regularly assembled cast of characters. Street corners and adjoining businesses are places where persons go to find friendship, a source of entertainment, and a spiritual high that stems from the collective consumption of alcohol, marihuana, and on occasion hard drugs. The atmosphere is secular but the street corner serves as the counterpart to what the devoutly religious call their church home. I mean that street men share a certain knowledge about each others personal lives. Matters of income, family problems, and sexual affairs are communal knowledge. Similar to the church, street corner groups enter into reciprocal relationships with one another.<sup>5</sup> To have access to a wide range of goods and services street corner groups loan money, articles of clothing, and automobiles. The system of favors is on a reciprocal basis -- the aim is to establish credit so that one is able to draw upon a friend when his resources are needed. There exists a thin line between reciprocal exchanges and exploitation. Harry, an unemployed laborer,

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<sup>5</sup>In much the same manner that offering is collected in the church, street people collected money for a drink. By piecing together what each has they are able to increase group resources on a reciprocal basis.

put it this way:

I ain't got a cryin dime. Some times I am so broke it hurts. To get it together I start a Leroy's. I know I can always find sugar or cotton there. They always good for something. When I see they broke I turn 'em on to a little something. That way I can always fall back on 'em. You got to always keep a little insurance for hard times.

To the residents of 24th Street, street corners are more than a location in geographical space; it is a way of life. A way of life with its own language, value system, and code of conduct. Just as the church has a status hierarchy -- minister, deacons, church mothers, musicians and heads of auxiliaries -- so does the street corner. In many respects, it is a world unto itself. A world in which "pimps, "players," "prostitutes," and young American entrepreneurs in the guise of drug dealers, are elevated to a position of special importance. The street corner is where the fundamentals of self-preservation play a decisive role in the allocation or withholding of status. The art of "making a hustle" receives more acclaim than jobs held in the work-a-day-world of the rest of the black citizenry. Rico, jokingly talked of his disdain for the work ethic one afternoon in a discussion of work experiences.

I ain't had a job in five years. I don't want to work and ain't gonna work. The man will have you breakin your ass for nothin . . . if you let 'em. A check? Ain't that one of those things that the white man hands out in them long brown envelopes? Man . . .

I ain't seen one of them mutha fuckas  
 in years. If I had to work for the  
 man . . . I'd be in trouble. As far as  
 I am concerned he can kiss my nigga ass!  
 A dog mutha fucka!

Not succumbing to the traditional work ethic means surviving by one's wits. A game that some are good at and others are not. A few acquire a unique life style as they put in more than forty-hours a week selling drugs, "low-ridin" in their ten thousand dollar automobiles that have so many accessories that they are referred to as "flied-down" or "freaked off," and "keepin" their bitches straight" so they can "sell that ass and bring that money."<sup>6</sup>

When my money gets right, I am gonna get me the badest ride of any nigga in North Omaha. Then I am gonna pull three or four of these nappy headed bitches and dress 'em nice, then put em out on the block sellin' that ass. Not to no nigga, the white man's get all the money.

Despite claims of making a hustle, not all street-corner men are well established at it. The majority survive by "chicken scratchin a little bit here and a little bit there." "Chicken scratchin" can best be described as an eclectic approach to surviving. In addition to watching the bona fide hustler "gettin'-over," those who must chicken

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<sup>6</sup>The attitude toward prostitution has little to do with sex. Sex is pushed into the background and business becomes the key factor. Clothes, cars, and keeping women in line either physically or verbally, are all part of the overhead that comes with one's business.



scratch participate in a round of activities which might include the sporadic selling of drugs, the selling of stolen merchandise, the playing of pool for money, participation in a crap game, and when his economic picture is uncorrectable, they may be forced to "slave for a while on a eight-to-five gig."<sup>7</sup>

At the bottom of the hustling hierarchy are those who do little chicken scratching; instead, they "lay up with the project bitches and wait for the government money." This is the individual who commands the least respect. It is withheld because they themselves become dependent. The holder of a welfare check virtually creates his own welfare system by giving a person just enough money, and in small enough doles, to keep him at a subsistence level, thereby keeping him dependent not only for money but for food, clothing, and shelter from the first of one month to the first of the next month.

The street corners are a circular social system in which the diverse parts are interdependent with one another. The low-rent housing projects stretch for many blocks in a long chain of mass-erected uniformity. It is here

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<sup>7</sup> Many who have disdain for the work ethic are not adverse to working if it isn't a "slave." The lack of training and job opportunities make it nearly impossible to obtain worthwhile work.

where housing needs of the inhabitants are frequently supplemented by "aid to dependent children" (ADC). The complex also provides a rent-free source of shelter for more than a few street corner men. Moreover, the income that comes in every month vitalizes the economy of 24th Street. Residents of the housing complex are stalked and sought after for food stamps and for a portion of their check. Food stamps are an end of the month hustle for those who can obtain them free or by having a tenant report her's stolen and then selling them to family people at a cut-rate price of ten dollars cash for \$25 worth of stamps. Checks are likewise stolen and cashed at a "fences." Charles describes his arrangement in the following paragraphs.

Food stamps ain't hard to get. I know enough bitches in the jects (projects) I can get 'em from. All the stamps come on the same day . . . you know they gonna be there.

I usually easy around the crib [in the projects; referring to more than one person's home] a few days before they come in. Mary-ann, I can get her stamps . . . that ain't no problem. But Lucy's a little bit slicker. Every once and awhile we put together a deal. You know. She reports her stamps stolen, she can always get new ones. I take the stamps down to Market and the dudes takes 'em off of my hands. I make a little hustle, he's satisfied, and I kick a few bills to Lucy. The others don't get nothin. That's what they get for lettin a dumb nigga like me put 'em in a trick. Lettin me play 'em out of they stamps. It's legal too! The ones you steal you got to get rid of before they trace the numbers. The ones you get from bitches you can sell easy. You can always find one of these

nigga tryin to feed a house full of babies.

Around the first of the month, the government income is quickly snapped up by retail stores who jack up their prices, car lots on the fringe of the community who do the same, drug dealers who make special trips to the "jeots," and a multitude of full-time as well as first-of-the-month-only jitney drivers.<sup>8</sup>

A portion of the revenue from the projects is then spent in the legal businesses around which street corner activity flourishes. It is not unusual for legal businesses to be a gathering place where street regulars meet to transact informal business dealing. Clarence, who has three women "boostin" (shop-lifting) for him, uses Sabazz's barber shop for his business.

You know where the nigga's gon be at early Friday evenin. You know everybody gon be on the street . . . get ready for the night. I take a armful of merchandise to the barber shop and unloud 'em like nobodies business. All you got to do is catch the nigga's before they get home with that money and you'll be alright. Richard (the owner) don't care so long as I am cool about it. I kick him a little somethin now and then. Besides if draws customers to the shop.

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<sup>8</sup>Some jitney drivers are not jitney drivers. They drive the few days that follow check day and rely chiefly upon the housing projects as an unstructured type of hustle.

The housing projects are a source of income for street corner men, businesses change tempo as the welfare recipients patronize them or as street corner men take a portion of their newly earned income to them to be spent directly or on illegal activities. Each respective area of life seems to be linked to the rest; with the unifying factor being the constant effort to survive. Residents in the housing complex are trying to make ends meet on a daily basis. As Pat, a resident of the projects for four years with three children stated,

No matter how hard I try to come out even at the end of the month I can't do it. The food runs out quick. I usually go to Maryland and catch a few meals. We scrap up all our food and put it together. My aunt, I guess she knows the situation, she don't care if I starve to death but she comes and picks up the kids and feeds them.

On the street corner the pace is no different. William, an unemployed day laborer and sometime jitney driver expressed the futility of street living when he said:

When I left Mississippi I thought I was doin something. I ended up out here on these dam street corners. Its a bitch out here. The longer you stay out here the more you find out its a dog world. Ain't nothin out here that you can't read about in tomorrows paper.

The imposed social, political, and economic isolation from the mainstream of society has fostered a unique set of circumstances under which street people must live. They

are aware of being exploited by agents of the dominant society but at the same time are forced to exploit their peers. The situation is not, in all cases, to their liking. With survival being an imperative, persons caught at the subsistence level cannot afford to be overly concerned about the consequences of their actions. Many individuals look around them in disgust but all are unable to verbalize or understand objectively a situation which they themselves are an integral part of. Their anger and loss of pride which stems from the way they are forced to live is verbalizable only to the extent of what they feel. Verbalization is short and its expressiveness may not be understood by outsiders. But there are hundreds of years of history being expounded upon when street corner people throw up their hands and exclaim, "these streets are a mutha fucka." One elderly "win-o" was more than descriptive in explaining street-corner activities and his life as a street-corner man. Of living and being on the streets he emphatically, and with a bit of oratory skill, stated that . . .

these streets corners are a whore house.  
People fuckin' one another, people gettin'  
fucked, people watchin' em get fucked, and  
others waitin' to be fucked.

Outsiders are in no position to impose standards of morality. We are certain of one thing; human beings are not born with a set of values, norms or behavioral traits.

These things are acquired through interaction in one's environment. Behavioral forms are learned as individuals or groups make adjustments to their environment. Rather than dwelling on issues of morality it would perhaps be more fruitful for outsiders to examine forces which shape the environment which in turn shapes behavior. To get at these forces one need only look to the American social structure.

#### "Mission" and 24th Street

On any given Sunday morning, the group in attendance at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church presents a contrast to the neighborhood. The newly erected wooden structure clashes with the drabness of the neighborhood and the sameness of the housing complex. The music, broadcast from within the church, is an overt expression of the differences between the various neighborhood groups and the church as a group. Yet upon closer inspection, we find that despite their differences, both street-corner men and the churched have an important commonality. The underlying theme in their lives is that of struggling in a hostile environment. Although caught up in a similar set of circumstances, the two social categories have different ways of blunting the impact of a troubled world. The church, being cognizant of this fact and also feeling that the Christian way has more merit, seeks to "spread the gospel" to street people and project residents. Deacon Porter, for example, saw a need

for evangelizing both on the streets and in the housing complex.

Some of these people on 24th Street could be gained by fellowship. You don't have to talk their language or do what they do. Some of these people in these apartments over here can be gained through mission required fellowship.

The element in mission is the "word of God." Armed only with the teachings of Christ as a weapon, the evangelist takes to the street corners and the projects. Mission is not a past-time for the devout member of St. Paul but is the "greatest work" a person can be involved in. For St. Paul is not just a baptist church, it is a "missionary" baptist church. Its purpose from the beginning, according to charter members, was to spread the gospel throughout Omaha but more specifically on 24th Street and the surrounding neighborhood. It's location was chosen with this in mind. Rev. Green, at a church anniversary program, told his church and the three visiting congregations:

God told me to go down on 24th Street and preach. I thought it was unfair of God to ask me to come down here on skid row. But I came. I told Deacon Galvin I wanted to build a church since God had told me what to do. Now . . . I'll preach in hell if God will fan back the flames. The bible says, the gospel must be carried all over the land. There must be someone to carry the word.

Persons who have been carrying out their mission for a number of years make a distinction between their world and the world of those who are to be evangelized. The community sub-sector is arbitrarily divided into domains of good and evil. The good is represented by the church and the evil is to be found "out on them streets." The domain of good is held together by "the grace of God" while the evil segment of the sub-sector is unquestionable dominated by the devil.

As worshipers step outside the church doors, they are within shouting distance (a low shout at that) of what they view as one of the key targets of their evangelism. Directly across the street, is a package liquor store with plenty of parking space out back that serves as a gathering place for alcoholics, project dwellers, and (illegal) merchandise sales persons. While church is being held, the street corner groups that occupy this open space carry on an active round of drinking, the selling of stolen merchandise, and a host of other street activities which range from just "talkin' shit" to "shootin' craps." Being confronted with a full range of activities enables the churched to reaffirm their religious existence by stressing the opposite side of the coin.

That over there across the street is the devil's place. Women walkin' round with their skirts above their knees. Years ago, they used to wear 'em like the choir robes . . . all the way down to here like pants.



Women should have respect. A man gets tired of lookin' up a woman's coat tail. Women should have respect cause men got more dog in 'em than dog himself. That's just man's nature.

Many who exit from the church and witness what lies before them condemn the activities and at the same time contribute part of the blame to businesses in the area which allow their clients to publically "carry on like that." They have an unfavorable attitude toward the gathering place in general but their anger is aroused more on Sundays. Since Sunday is a day to praise the deity, church people feel that others should at least "show a little respect on the Lord's day."

J.C. closes up on Sunday mornings. But that ole Jew opens early. They be drinkin' and usin' all kinds of language while shootin' their craps and thangs. They oughta make 'em close them places on Sunday mornings. Them folks downtown don't care nothin' bout no God. All they want is to lay back in their nice neighborhood and let the Negroes that run these places for 'em make 'em some money. Our peoples is got to wake up.

On the street evangelism is not an hour a day or two hours a day type of affair but is a continuous endeavor. To efficiently carry out mission it must become a part of one's life. Persons must carry on a perpetual effort of evangelizing whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. With this in mind, the minister and the members of the church take advantage of the ready made gathering of people behind the liquor store. The handful of project dwellers,

who in the summer time emerge from their dull, cramped quarters to catch a few summer breezes while visiting with neighbors, also provide a ready formed audience. The two audiences, though engrossed in activities that clash with the nature of events unfolding in the church building, are not left completely at the hands of the devil. The message is broadcast over a loudspeaker system and they are exposed to the word. There are several loudspeakers on the exterior of the church. Worship services and musical programs, from beginning to end, carry from the small church to points within hearing distance. The broadcast enables street people to participate in their daily routines; all the while they are subjected to evangelism. Sister Knowles sees the need for such forms of evangelism but has doubts about its effects. Her questioning of the impact of broadcasting was not unlike opinions I had heard others express.

The job of the church is to carry God's word to sinners. They hear the singin' and the Reverend's preachin over these loudspeakers. I been with the Reverend for twelve years and we never turned anybody away who came because they heard the message. No matter how raggedy they was . . . even if they didn't have no shoes on. But it don't do no good cause the devils got 'em deaf, and blind.

Whether or not broadcasting the service does any good is a matter of interpretation. Without a doubt, the broadcast in itself cannot save sinners. What it does do is

attract the attention of neighborhood actors. During the summer months, the minister has both an audience on the inside as well as on the outside of the church. The ones on the inside listen, believe, and strive to put their beliefs into action. The ones on the outside listen in the same manner that one would listen to a personality serving as host for a radio show.

Live broadcasting has several effects on the street-corner audience. A few respond to the broadcast by going inside the church for a first-hand look (i.e., this partially accounts for the periodic presence of drunks). Others, like Curt, want to enter the sanctuary to satisfy long-held curiosities but never seem to make it.

They be gettin' down every Sunday. It's hard to believe them bands be playin church music. I hear the music and be high off that good bush (marihuana) too! Shit . . . I want to go in a jam with 'em. Just to see what the story is.

There are those who are attracted to the sounds being blared out by the loudspeakers but are not sure why. The worship event evokes feelings they have managed to submerge as they have taken on the callousness required of them by street corner associates. Despite the toughness and the public denial of the validity of the church, religion has had a decisive influence on the lives of more than one street-corner inhabitant. During private moments of listening to

worship services, when peers are not around, it is possible to discover that their denial of religion is not a totally resolved matter. They doubt its validity but the doubts are discussed with a degree of caution. The cautious denials stem from being caught between two worlds. The harshness of street life is brought out by the exposure to the religious behavior of the church. In a like manner, religious behavior is seen as an irrational approach to the conditions of street life. The momentary confusion caused by a clash of the two worlds is explained as Karl recounts his experience.

I was walkin' down Franklin last night and heard this music. It made me think about what was happening out here (on the streets) and what was happening in there (church). Two different things I didn't go in there . . . but it made me think for a moment.

Broadcasting to a sub-sector of the community may not save souls directly but it has to be classified as a success. Most who do not venture into the church are made curious by the sorted sounds springing from the loudspeakers. The seeds of curiosity are planted and individuals will at least think about the subject of religion. In other cases, loudspeakers may not do the actual converting but they nevertheless bring persons into the church. Once on the inside, entrants are slowly worn down by fellowship and a front door type of evangelism.

### Front-Door Evangelism

The researcher has coined the term front door evangelism to distinguish "mission work" taking place in the field from that carried out within the church. Front door evangelism will be used in reference to all those forces and mechanisms at work in converting people from "visitors" to "members." These exclude techniques employed by the minister. The forces include the warm greetings and handshakes by deacons and church mothers, the welcoming of visitors, giving visitors an opportunity to address the congregation, and the issuing of an invitation to worship at St. Paul on some future date.<sup>9</sup> The basis of evangelism within the church is the establishment of interpersonal social relations by making new entrants feel at ease.

#### a) Music

Part of the wearing-down process are the weekly musical programs featuring three or four gospel singing groups. Electrical instruments occupy a central position in each group and are a source of listening enjoyment. Street people, who have nothing else to do, are likely to

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<sup>9</sup>For a clearer and more concise discussion of the welcoming of visitors, giving visitors an opportunity to address the congregation, and the issuing of an invitation to worship at St. Paul on some future date, see the following sections entitled "Announcement of Visitors" and "Open Church."

alter their consciousness by "gettin' full of that shit" and then go into the church to hear live music "free too!" Though the lyrics are different from the ones they're used to hearing, the lively rhythms are not that much of a deviation. Musical programs are low-key affairs that are devoid of pressures to conform to the behavior exemplified by the church. Programs resemble musical jam sessions as audience and musicians are allowed to be themselves. The audience and musicians enter into an exchange. The former are interested in entertainment; whereas, the latter are there to help in the fulfillment of this desire and to perfect their talents.

We would appreciate it if you would let us know if we're too loud or if our group can be improved. When we travel to different places we are representing the State of Nebraska. We want to represent you as best we can. Are there any more groups in the audience? We don't want to overlook anyone. Anyone who wants to perform are welcome.

Musicians do not charge for their services but instead receive an audience and a place to perform. The church is happy to provide the service. The large audiences look pretty appealing as the minister declares "open church" at the end of the program. Musical groups performing on the loosely structured programs are usually in some way affiliated with the church (i.e., members of St. Paul are scattered throughout a number of groups) but the stage is open to anyone from the community with musical talent. Hence, the programs

are an attraction to street people because they have a likeness to a variety show. There is a thin line separating the religious from the secular aspects.

Secular aspects found in the music of gospel groups are not negatively interpreted by singers or by those who listen with an attentive ear. Rather than admitting that portions of their performance are secular, they stress the religious origins of music. A frequently heard phrase is, "Music came from heaven . . . and the devil stole it. The Lord is gonna get it back though!"

Amidst the secular nature of musical programs are a number of professional musicians who, unlike their peers, are not of the world. Singing the gospel is, to them, more than an opportunity to perfect an art. It is the equivalent of spreading the word; only through song. Musicals, in addition to providing occasion for them to sing the word, are excellent chances for persons to sharpen their verbal skills. For some have aspirations to enter the pulpit following the ending of a musical career. People of the street do not object to religious statements by musicians. They view them as an introduction to a song. Perhaps the familiar experience of hearing blues and/or rhythm and blues performers "rap" their way into a song explains the partial acceptance of religious messages that precede each song. The currently popular rhythm and blues artist Issach Hayes,

for example, has become a folk hero because of his ability to rap his way into a song. The rapping portion is oftentimes longer than the song itself, is listened to intensively, and get the audience stirred up.

By gradually moving into a song, church musicians have the same effect on the church as do ministers.

We don't have to worry about the troubles that are in our way. All you have to do is look to Jesus. There's a bright side somewhere you know. Sometimes when trouble gets in our way and seem like everything goes wrong . . . we have to cry. But if you trust in the Lord, there's a bright side somewhere. We thank the Lord for being here tonight. Many others would like to be here but are not able. We're here because the Lord blessed us. He's the joy of our lives. . . . Oh, yes he is! I found him one Sunday mornin and sometimes! . . . Sometimes! (Pauses and says to audience, 'I feel pretty good now'), I tell myself these words; 'I trust in the Lord.' If you trust in him things will be alright!

Musicians delivering pre-song addresses do not have the advantage of a Board of Deacons responding to his call. He does, however, have two built-in devices that add to his presentation. Members of his singing group respond to phrases whenever they are called so that the artist has a band of cheer leaders at every turn. As a supplement to their voices, musicians are also masters at using their instruments to respond to a singer's call. The compact unit has enough call and response power, when added to responses from the



audience, to compete with the "preaching power" of the best ministers.

Musical programs are a source of enjoyment for street corner people as they sit, stand, or lean on cars, curbs or buildings and soak up music from the loudspeakers or venture inside the church and enjoy it first-hand. Their musical appreciation, when added to that of regular church goers, is a boon to individuals or groups wishing to perfect their musical talents in the presence of a live participating audience. For St. Paul the relationship between musicians and audience is part of the evangelism scheme which draws from the street sub-sector of the black community.

b) "Announcement of Visitors"

As stressed earlier St. Paul offers a variety of events which have religious, quasi-religious and status functions; this pulls a heterogeneous population of community actors into the church. Regardless of their rationale for being in church on Sunday morning, whether in the capacity of worshiper, a stranger from the streets, or an action seeker, unfamiliar faces are a cause of excitement. Participating members of the church have a strong desire to know who is visiting the church. The church has incorporated into its structure an information gathering mechanism which partially satisfies this desire. The process, known as the

"announcement of visitors," is a communication link between a visitor in the setting and the congregation at large. The communication link involves more a collecting than a sharing of information; it draws visitors into a monologue. The church, through one of its deacons, issues a standardized statement which eliminates the possibility of a dialogue.

At this time we would like to ask all visitors to stand and remain standing until they can be welcomed by the members of St. Paul Baptist Church. Any visitors having anything to say may do so at this time.

Initially, the announcement of visitors is a welcoming apparatus. All worshipers are welcomed by being treated in the same fashion as one would treat a guest in his home. The devices also have a strategic value. It is the primary protective instrument standing between the church and the world at large. Members who worship together and have identified St. Paul as their church home must, in the case of visitors, open their church home to strangers.<sup>10</sup>

Welcoming visitors is related to two fundamental church doctrines. Both tenants are an important part of

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<sup>10</sup>At one particular point in the research, the congregation was acutely sensitive to "suspicious looking" strangers. The period coincided with the assassination attempt which ended in the death of Martin Luther King's mother. Since the attempt took place in church, the congregation was cautious of all strangers. During this period, a stranger was asked, in the middle of a sermon, to identify himself and "what he wanted."

St. Paul's relationship with non-members. Many visitors are either from another church located somewhere in the city or are members of religious organizations lying outside of the State. In regards to these individuals, the welcoming process is a means by which St. Paul is able to extend an invitation to fellowship. Others who classify themselves as visitors are members of no church or have previously held membership in an organization but have since become "backsliders." For these people, the warm welcome is the first step in the evangelistic process.

The church, by announcing visitors, acquires such information as name, place of residence, church affiliation, and an assortment of other information. Most of the latter types of information are dependent on the openness of the visitor. After such information is gathered, individual church members are able to approach the visitor either on the basis of fellowship or evangelism.

The mechanism is also used as a technique of separation. If a person is a frequent visitor on repeated Sundays the church has a way of distinguishing her from action seekers. Action seekers and visitors are not classified as one in the same. A person becomes a visitor mainly through choice. Even in the midst of psychological pressure from congregational members, a person has the choice of remaining seated when "visitors" are asked to stand. Action seekers

typically choose to remain seated in that they consider themselves outsiders to most church rituals. Their position puts a strain on the relations they have with the church. Without the benefit of religious information on action seekers, the churchers are left without an automatic guide as to whether to approach the sub-group on the basis of fellowship or evangelism. Announcement of visitors removes this difficulty since it separates out those with religious potential from those seeking action. If a visitor stands on successive occasions he is, no doubt marked as a prospect for membership in the church. By repeatedly separating himself from the rest of the congregation, the visitor leaves himself open to front door evangelism. He is personally welcomed with a smile, a handshake, and an envelope for offering. As the person continually identifies herself as a "visitor," the congregations' evangelism slowly pressures her into a new role definition.<sup>11</sup>

The role of visitor is such that it has very little permanence about it. One begins as a "visitor," with increased participation becomes a "stranger," and from there will hopefully become a member. The announcement of visitors is a continual process by which the visitor (with pressures from the congregation) is able to slowly redefine

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<sup>11</sup>For a brief discussion of psychological pressures, see Chapter I. The researcher's movement into the mesoteric was accompanied by informal congregational pressures.

his position in the church. His own personal feelings and convictions, when coupled with the social environment created by church members, slowly but surely moves him down the road of membership.

Worshippers who have held previous membership in the church but for one reason or another identify themselves as visitors (i.e., because they have been absent over a long period of time and communion must be taken at least once every three months to retain membership in the Baptist Church or because they have left town and since returned) are not exempt from evangelism. Since the congregation already has religious information on them and they have an identity which categorizes them as neither a visitor or an action seeker, the announcement of visitors is used in a different way in dealing with them. The subtle pressures are replaced by a more overt approach. Put differently, there is no need to classify the individual as one who is in search of fellowship or as a person to be subjected to the slow wearing-down act of evangelism. Therefore, the process which moves a visitor to the role of participating member is shortened. The announcement of visitors, in this situation, changes from a monologue to a dialogue. It now involves, the updating of religious information as the parties engage in a dialogue, the elimination of the middle processes of evangelism and fellowship, and the asking of

the worshiper (in a point blank manner) to declare her intentions.

Deacon: We have one of our old members with us here this morning. Sister Boyd, would you stand for a moment. Sister Boyd is an old friend to us at St. Paul. I don't know if she is just visiting, or if she's back to stay. If she's gonna be here for a while, St. Paul needs her. The church can always use a good worker.

The lady being addressed is one of the persons who stood during the announcement of visitors. She, at the same time, declined the opportunity to comment. When the announcer had finished with his duties and things were turned into the hands of the musicians, another deacon interrupted. He stood and asked Sister Boyd to stand again. His actions turned the congregation's attention on the visiting ex-member. Since her family were regular church goers one might speculate that he had more knowledge of her current plans than he lead the congregation to believe. At any rate, by asking her for a statement a second time, the ex-member was prodded into declaring her intentions under public pressure. She began her speech by saying:

I've been in Las Vegas but I would like to say . . . St. Paul feels like home. I am glad to be back. I'll try not to fall away from the church again.

The above matter was handled in a rather diplomatic fashion. The minister, however, commands more authority and

is likely to display it; especially to recruit worshipers who, despite their continual presence, continue to define themselves as visitors.

I want to see you come forward when the doors of the church are open. You can't fool nobody . . . tellin' ppeople you belong to a church. You don't belong to a church. You don't belong to nobody's church. You know I am right. If you don't come foreward, you ain't being fair to yourself. To get into the kingdom of God . . . you got to come forward.

Publically pressuring individuals into a declaration of membership occurs only periodically. It is, nonetheless, worth noting since it presents data on the recruitment function of the structural process of "announcement of visitors."<sup>12</sup>

The tactic of openly asking worshipers to state their relationship to the church is the end result of a lengthy, long, drawn-out series of actions. The person has already gone through the acts of being welcomed, submitting religious information via a monologue, separated out from individuals with little or no religious potential, and being evangelized

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<sup>12</sup>To grasp a full understanding, the researcher is advised to select an individual who is defined as a visitor and follow his change in role definition as his exposure and participation in the setting increases. The alternative (see Chapter I) is to become a visitor and record the stages of process yourself. The choice is one of starting with the defined role of visitor and going through the re-definition of an individual's position or starting with the public pressuring and working backwards.

on a face-to-face basis.

Once the person or persons in question have been influenced to the extent of taking on a permanent role in the setting, they are then furnished an occasion to do so by becoming a member of the church. "Open church" permits community actors, whether they undergo the role transformation from visitor to member or not, to become an established part of the congregation. Role progression is necessary only if one is to gain acceptance among the band of believers in Christ. But to become a name on the ledger sheet or a cold statistic; there are few who are refused membership through "open church." The willingness to accept anyone into the church is spoken of with a sense of pride. Mother Williams, among others, views the liberal membership policy as a distinctive characteristic of St. Paul. To her, the church's recruitment policy excludes no one.

This church is open to anybody. White folks. Black folks, anybody. This is a church of God, this ain't no big folks (referring to class) church. We don't turn nobody away. The drunks on 24th Street can become members; all they got to do is uphold the rules of membership.

#### "Open-Church;" the culminating Element in Role Transformation

Open church is the portion of the service which occurs at the end of all scheduled worship events and musical programs. It appears to be separate and apart from



the rest of the service but in actuality is very much a part of the religious activities which precede it. From a business standpoint, the phrase, "the doors of the church are open," is the minister's effort at selling religion. The prospective buyer has participated in and witnessed the days worship event and now has the chance to join with other worshipers and become a permanent receiver of what the church has to offer. The connecting link between the presentation of the product and the selling of what the church has to offer is the sermon.

For example, in one of the minister's sermons, the topic of heaven was the central theme. Towards the latter part of the message, he began to bridge the gap that occurs in the flow of the service as he moved from the message to open church. He began a conclusion as he digressed from his intensive intoned preaching.

You know it's nice to have a home. Its good to have a home town to go back to. When I go back home, I visit my kin folks and see all the friends I grew up with. But everytime I go back another one of my friends is dead. There are highways runnin' through where homes used to be. There's a building standin' where I used to walk. The only true home that we have is heaven. Don't take heaven away from me. That's all I got to hang on to. Heaven is the only thing that keeps me goin'.

Having successfully completed his message and the final summary of what it is that the congregation should be

searching for, permanence and a final resting place, he carefully makes his way from behind the pulpit, grabs the microphone, and makes his way down a set of steps -- into the audience. He is now ready to discuss the theme of the message (heaven) in relation to membership in the church.

In this day and age we need God. There is no substitute for God. Our mothers, our fathers, and our friends won't be with us always. They leave us at the grave. But Jesus will never fail us. Put your faith in Jesus . . . he's withstood the test of time. My mother told me something I still believe today. Everybody has got to die. This is the only place you can prepare for it. Some of you here this mornin' don't know Jesus. If I didn't know Jesus, I would come foreward this morning. If I were a sinner I'd come foreward. It ain't no shame to want to meet Jesus. When its all over in this world . . . not everybody's gonna make it to heaven. Doors of the church are open!

In a very fluent manner, the minister has delivered a sermon and is now in a position to interpret the impact of his message. Open church, at times, is a quantitative indicator of the success of the message. Worshipers have been exposed to the product via the sermon, told where it can be bought, and given the chance to make a purchase as the minister extends the invitation to membership. All that is left is for individual worshipers to respond. If there is no immediate response, the minister enters into a brief spur of the moment sermon that touches upon death, friendship, sickness, soul salvation, and all of the other reasons

why a person needs a "church home." In the event that the last minute sermon creates no response, he calls for a song from the musicians.

1. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy on some sinner. Save some sinner. Save some sinner. Lord, save some sinner.
2. This may be the last time, I don't know. This may be my last time bowing at the alter, I don't know. This may be the last time for callin' on Jesus. I don't know children, this may be my last time.
3. Let me lean on you Jesus, let me lean on you. My soul is tired, my body needs to rest. I need to lean on you Jesus.

These are three songs that typify those which are performed during open church. Music becomes important in that it is a direct extension of open church. The music that is played and sung fits the mood of the occasion. That is, the words are suggestive. We cannot adequately measure the effect they have on listener. But one thing is certain; the wording of all songs offered up by the minister makes reference to what St. Paul can do for prospective clients. The church can serve as a friend or a leaning post, allow one to meet Jesus and thus seek out soul salvation, and be a guide through a life that is uncertain.

If the anticipated recruit remains unmoved by the selected spiritual, there is no need for alarm. Usually one or more congregation members have ecstatic experiences in conjunction with the singing. The behavior of the shouters

becomes the focus of attention and the "power of the Holy Ghos'" temporarily replaces the minister as the key recruiter.

Open church puts the minister in a position where its talents are matched against the wills of individual worshipers. To break their wills he tries, and tries, and tries again. using a variety of approaches until he finally pulls someone from the audience. Subsequently, a tremendous expenditure of energy takes place. The tries-at-pulling-recruits from the audience is little different from the situation of coming up short on offering. Sometimes the minister singles out and attempts to pull selected individuals; for example, a young white girl was present in the congregation for two successive weeks. On her third visit the minister declared,

doors of the church is open. Will someone  
come . . . anybody. It don't matter  
whether you're black or white, anybody can  
come foreward. I said it don't matter  
what color you is anybody can come forward.

When no one will voluntarily step forward, the pastor might, quite unexpectedly, employ theatrics to separate out individuals with membership in a church from those having no affiliation with a religious organization. Similar to tactics employed in the collection of offering, the theatrical tricks use the congregation as a psychological force. The minister very tactfully requests the congregation to stand and then begins to separate them out.

At this time I would like to have those who are not back sliding, those who are a member of a church, and those who have confessed to Christ to be seated . . . the rest remain standing.

An unattentive worshiper will look around the room and find himself, and a few others, to be the only ones standing. There they stand facing the minister and the entire congregation. Since few persons ever contest the minister, even under the severest pressure, it is sometimes better to come forward than to defend one's lack of church affiliation. Most worshipers are successful at withstanding the pressure but many of these may never attend another worship service at St. Paul. If they do, they are surely to be attentive during open church.

When the call for new members is carried to the extreme and no one comes forward, the minister is put in an awkward position; one that comes close to begging. He has a number of ways to remedy this situation. For instance, he sometimes tells prospective members:

I am gonna leave you out there for another week. I ain't gonna beg you to come. You need God, God don't need you. God has told me to leave you out there, you just ain't ready yet.

When the response is minimal, statements like the above, are a reminder that the minister is a person to be asked rather than one who does the asking.

### The Ceremonial Portion of Open Church

The ceremonial portion of open church presents to all prospective members the routes to membership in the church. Worshipers can become members "by previous Christian experience," by way of a "letter of recommendation," or by becoming a "candidate for baptism." The first two routes mean that a person has been baptized and can become a member of the church by admission of either having fallen away or being in the process of relocating his membership from one church to another. Candidates for baptism must be "born again," through entering the water and cleansing of the soul, before they are full-fledged members.

The ceremony of open church involves routine interaction between prospective members and the minister. There is nothing startling about the ceremony for it resembles the initiation into a voluntary association. The statements of the minister and deacons have a repetitious quality about them. They are standardized and change very little from Sunday to Sunday.

Deacon: We have here, Sharon, who wishes to become a member of St. Paul by candidate for baptism.

Minister: Sharon, do you want to join this church?  
Do you believe in the resurrection of Christ?  
Do you want to be baptized?

Sharon: Yes.

Minister: Brothers and Sisters, you heard the statement of these young people. What shall I do?

Deacons: After having heard the statement, we move that we accept them as candidates for baptism.

So goes the routine of inducting new members. Once the verbal part of the ceremony is completed, members of the church receive all new members by collectively marching passed them and extending "the right hand of fellowship." New recruits then have all the rights, privileges, and duties of any other member.

Despite the routinization of the ceremonial portion of open church, it can at times be the most exciting portion of a worship service. The minister's repeated offer that, "any sinner has the right to come into the church and serve God," sometimes brings forward not only those who have sinned but those who are in the midst of sin as well. Open church often forward throughly intoxicated individuals. Their level of intoxication is so apparent that the interest of the congregation is aroused as they stagger forward and then proceed to lean and sway through the ceremony. The minister is fully aware of the circumstances but tries to exploit the opportunity to save a real live sinner, in the presence of the entire congregation. The congregation in turn watches as their faith in the power of the divine is reinforced, but such is not always the case. Some drunks actively challenge the religious tenants of the church. By doing so, they disrupt the routine manner in which the ceremony of open church

is conducted.

Deacon: We have here Roosevelt, to become a member by previous Christian expericnce.

Minister: "Roosevelt" . . . (he is abruptly cut off by the weaving and bobbing drunk). The audience becomes aware of the situation, the devoutly religious gasp but are still curious. The action seekers are so pleased that they light up all over.

Roosevelt: I believe God is somewhere. I don't know where but he's out there somewhere. Y'all probably don't know where he is either but you pretend you do. (He turns to the minister and addresses him directly.) Is that all you want to hear? Do you believe in God? I think it's wrong for you to be up here talkin' this religious staff. You ain't givin' these people nothin'. The same nigga's that was hungry yesterday, are hungry today. They'll probably be hungry tomorrow and you up here talkin' that mess. You ain't . . .

The minister stood by and let the person proceede with his speech until it became obvious that he wasn't as intoxicated as his motor skills had indicated. Rather than argue with the man, the minister very calmly walked over to the piano and directed the musician to play a selection. The music did two things. First, it drowned out the drunk who subsequently walked back to his seat. Secondly, it cooled out the audience so that, at the conclusion of the song, the minister was in the driver's seat again. The flow of worship service had been disrupted but the minister was able



to make use of the drunk's behavior. He skillfully avoided attacking the disrupter and placed the situation in a religious context.

The devil is everywhere. He's in this church right now . . . tryin' to destroy it. We ask you to pray for this young man. We ask you to pray that God might release satan's grip.

Open church is an invitation to membership which is extended to all interested parties. St. Paul's desire to evangelize 24th Street opens the church to individuals from all walks of life. From homosexuals, to prostitutes, to gamblers, to drug addicts and their suppliers, and to mothers wishing to "raise the children right." The minister is quite right in saying, "you never know who comes to visit God's house."

#### Why Become a Member: A Summary

The benefits gained from membership in the church have been mentioned throughout the previous chapters, but nowhere have they been discussed in a systematic way. A discussion of benefits, as we see it, can be treated on two levels. On one level the benefits will be viewed from the perspective of the church. On the second level the benefits of church membership will be examined through the eyes of the joiners. The following benefits were largely mentioned during points of actual participation in the worship service. Since benefits derived from membership were verbalized in

public situations and not under private circumstances, the social reasons for religious affiliation are suppressed while the religious are accentuated.

a) Through the Eyes of the Church

Through the eyes of the church, individuals should aspire to attain membership because it will enable a person to come into the church and serve God. The reward is that his sins will be forgiven and he will be assured of guidance through a troubled world.

Lord, you created the world and everything in it. You put us here to serve you. Some of us are serving other men and women. Some are worshipping money but money won't get them through. The only way we'll make it is by the hand of God.

Church members ordinarily put heavy emphasis on the spiritual aspects of religion but, in displaying the benefits of membership, they repeatedly look toward the religious institution as the gateway to salvation. They would have individuals believe that the institution and not spiritual reformation is the cleanser of sins and the way to heaven.

The church is time tested . . . its been here for a long time. As Christians, its our duty to build a church. If you don't build no church, how you gonna save anybody. You can't live the word of God without a church cause the word says what? . . . build a church.

Until the time comes to make "that final journey," the church provides other benefits. Among the most important

of these is friendship. A church home is a permanent source of friendship in times of need. Church members like to view the church and its congregation as one's only friend during times of bereavement and personal sickness. The following statement was taken from a portion of the worship service known as "announcements."

A popular song, its on the top forty as you know, says 'a little rain must fall in all ours lives before we know the meaning of sunshine.' We must wear a frown before we understand a smile and we must be down before we know the meaning of up. Don't get me started now cause it don't take to much to get me goin'. I just want to say . . . that you don't miss the church until you come down sick. When you come down sick, the doctor can only go so far . . . then God has to go the rest of the way. Members of St. Paul laying in their sick beds is askin' for your prayers.

Visiting, praying, calling, or writing to the "sick and shut in" is a unique service provided to members by the church. It is made available, not only to members but to friends and relatives whose names are submitted to the sick list by a member. Visiting, calling, and writing are the most personal parts of the service and are usually performed on a regular basis among band members.

Another benefit, from the perspective of the organization, is the cathartic quality of religion. Living under constant "burdens" is, to the church, made easier if one is a member. The threat of death and sickness are among

the many burdens the church can help man carry. Man is powerless to overcome these uncertainties but by gaining membership in "the Lord's house" persons are well equipped to join with and draw enough strength from their peers to withstand the pressures.

We don't know about tomorrow. We can only live from day-to-day. We don't know what the future holds for us. We have to live from day to day with Jesus. With Jesus and our church home in mind the load gets a little lighter.

Finally, the church offers future members a chance to establish what the ministers and deacons call a "record." The record in question is not the same as the one's being kept in court houses and legal offices. Members of the church are given the chance to begin a record that will coincide with the "permanent record being kept upstairs." The offer comes closer to falling into the descriptive category of scare tactics. Frankly, the church is cautioning future members to get their attendance in order, so their record will be straight "when that time comes." Attendance is not enough to get one's credentials in order; membership in a church must accompany it. The minister suggests that it's never too late to start a "good record" for one "never knows what tomorrow will bring." In short, the church offers the benefits of, a church home where worshipers can serve God and be cleansized of his sins, a gateway to heaven,

friendship in the time of death or sickness, a leaning post to help persons through the uncertainties of life, and an opportunity to start a good record.

b) Membership through the Eyes of the Joiners

The benefits of membership, as seen through the eyes of joiners, were extracted from testimonies which took place during open church. An analysis of our data suggests that there is a high degree of consistency between what the church considered as benefits and the reasons given by joiners for their pursuit of membership. For the most part, testimonies indicate that new members viewed the benefits of church membership from the same perspective as those who had become a permanent part of the organization (i.e., see the previous paragraph). But, our record of observation also points out additional rationales for church membership.

Joiners, unlike the already-churched, often spoke from a first-person point of view and in doing so conveyed personal experiences which lead to their desire for membership. In place of the first-person point of view, the already-churched had a tendency to speak from an organizational stance. The notion of "I," which preceded testimonies, was replaced by worshipers initiating conversation about the benefits of membership with the phrase, "the church." When an individual has become a member of the organization we

suspect that personal testimonies give way to standardized benefits which are collectively defined by the church hierarchy and subsequently handed down to the congregation.

Joiners will often suggest that they desire to become members not because of the listed benefits but because their personal lives have been touched by the spirit of God. They attribute their willingness to attain membership to witnessing the power of God.

God will fix it for you. I know this myself.  
He will feed you when you're hungry. Bring  
you water when your thirsty. The devil didn't  
want me to move out of my seat this mornin'  
but God took all the hate out of me. He  
cleansed my heart one Friday afternoon and  
made me a believer. One Friday afternoon I  
saw Jesus and he turned my life around.

Paralleling incidents which give mention to the power of God, are ones in which the joiner seeks membership not to enjoy any benefits at all but to merely give thanks.

God has been good to me. He's been my father  
and my mother for the last eight years.  
He's made my road smooth for me and I know  
it. I want to join the church so I can  
thank him.

Here again we find the personal aspects of an individual's existence and the absence of any mentioning of what the organization offers in the way of benefits.

There are large numbers of individuals who desire membership in the church for reasons unknown to them. They can only look to their past socialization as the answer.

I was brought up in the church, but when I came here to Omaha, Nebraska, I left the church. Since then I been livin' a lie. If the church will take me back, I'll do my best.

Worshippers falling into this category have been socialized into believing that membership in a church is an indispensable part of their lives. Perhaps the guilt instilled in them during childhood has forced them to reconsider church membership. They too do not speak in terms of the standardized listing of benefits which the organization offers future buyers. Rather than show a concern for the benefits of membership, these persons have an engrained notion that non-church affiliation creates an unexplainable void in their lives.

Newly acquired church members are offered a substantial number of rewards for becoming members of St. Paul. The rewards have to do with religious ends. Not all actors in the setting are in the pursuit of religious ends (i.e., the shouters) and those that are also have certain social ends in mind. Since the church draws from a wide variety of community actors and some are not of the church world, we hold that there is somewhat of an interface between the church and the sub-sector from which it obtains its recruits. We further postulate that many community actors are attracted to the church because the interface between church and community sub-sector is characterized by parallel

forms of social behavior.

These parallel forms act as agents in furthering the relation between the church and the black community. By examining parallel behavioral forms, one becomes cognizant of an important fact -- the church has incorporated elements of the community sub-sector into its structure. By having done so, it is able to appeal to an audience which includes more than those persons who are in pursuit of religious ends. St. Paul, like other organizations, is shaped by the environment from which it draws its clientele. Since church members themselves are in contact with "the ways of the world," there is a natural drift of behavior from the world into the church. Inhabitants of the community sub-sector, in the event that they are not pursuing religious goals, must find something of interest in the church if it is to win their support.

Our contention is that the church has, within its structure, certain cultural traits that appeal to black folks in general; irregardless of what their goals are. Whether they are shouters, band members, action seekers, or the man on the street (who is one step removed from action seekers), all share a common history and thus a common cultural heritage. By viewing parallel forms of social behavior existing between church and community sub-sector, a few of the cultural traits which cement the church's'



relation to a segment of the black community can be better understood.

## CHAPTER IV

PARALLEL FORMS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR:  
THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY SUB-SECTOR"Doin' Time at the Crossroad;" Secular  
Counterpart to Living in a Troubled World

Street corner people do not view the world from a religious perspective but their world view is similar to that of church members. In other words, the world view of street people is comparable to that of the church members since they too believe their existence is shaped by a world of trouble. But they are not dependent upon religion as a cure all. The expression of living in a troubled world is also different from the stating of "trials and tribulations" which has become an acceptable part of religious behavior. Street people have their own expressive forms and utilize them to verbalize their individual confrontations with the environment around them. Harry's conception of his situation is representative of the small circle of street people who frequent a local pool hall. He and his peers describe their condition with the expression, "doin' time at the crossroads." One summer evening, while sitting, talking, and lazily watching cars pass up and down 24th Street, Harry

depicted his condition in the following way.

Man this place kicks my ass! Just tryin' to make it from day to day is a bitch. Seem like I just can't make it out of this hole I am in. Everyday I get up its a hustle. It's a way of life . . . I expect it. Huh! . . . Doin' time at the crossroads.

On a similar occasion, Buba, who's involved in a number of semi-illegal occupations, articulated his outlook.

It seems like I've hit a string of hard times. I am at the crossroads. These last couple of years have been hell on me. I've been so broke that at times I don't know if I am comin' or goin'. I think this is as far down in the hole I've been since I've been home from the war. And its kickin' my ass. Even my bitches are just as broke as I am. What little bit they're gettin' I am takin' it and it seems like -- the more I take from them the deeper I slide into the hole.

I guess I am gonna have to face it though. I am strugglin' just tryin to keep a little food in my stomach. Just so I can have enough energy to get back and forth so I can get on my feet. If not I'll stay here and get my money right and go back out to L.A. (Los Angelas). What I am gonna do out there I don't even know. But what ever it is I might can find two good meals a day. Things are just hard for everybody around here.

Doing time at the crossroads and a world of trouble constitute world views of two groups. Both emphasizes the tensions which stem from occupying a certain socioeconomic, as well as racial, category in modern society. Being at the crossroads and living in a trouble world instill a feeling of having little control over the directions of one's life.

Life can take a turn for the better or the worst, the individual is largely powerless. While treading water at the crossroads (i.e., by hustling to "make groceries," "gettin' the house rent together," struggling against the realities of ghetto life, and on many occasions being so overwhelmed by this realities that one takes the grocery money and the house rent money and "parties it away"), street people have developed mechanisms which give them a temporary escape from the struggle at hand. For the street groups of 24th Street one such form of respite is "jamin'." Laura, who is described by her peers as a "partier" sees the chance to celebrate thusly:

I have to find somethin' to get into. Me and Sheila, and Pat, and Dorothy Bland usually party pretty hard. You have to ask them why they party. I like to get down cause it takes my mind off of a lot of things. If I couldn't get fucked-up and party, this dam project livin' would drive me crazy. When I am partyin' I don't think about nothin' . . . but partyin' harder. You know . . . gettin' down to the max (maximum). I party hard all weekend and I am ready for Monday mornin.

A brief respite for church people is their religious participation which results, for some, in the acts of falling out and getting happy. The two activities provide a momentary escape from the troubled world around them. Instead of getting happy or falling out, street people search for a collective gathering, where music is a prime factor, so they

can "party" or "jam." Partying gets so involved that persons enter into an almost frenzied state on the dance floor. It is a condition in which the participants are said to be "gettin' funky." Partying is more than getting high off of liquor or drugs and dancing; it is a feeling that comes from the soul. The inner expressiveness is a key ingredient in partying. The lack of a suitable atmosphere curtails the desire to party. It is a collective venture and is largely dependent on the mood of the crowd.<sup>13</sup> The importance of a participating crowd was commented on by Sheila when she said:

They jams hard down to Walt's. Nigga's be dancin' and sweatin' to the music. Makes me want to say fuck it -- and get out there and let the music take over. Ain't nothin' be happening down at the club. Niggas be worst than white folks -- tryin' to party with all the lights on, and the music down low. They don't know what's happening, they got a hole in they soul.

Partying is more than a two or three hour affair; some people "party for days." They go from the local night spots to "after hour joints" or "house parties" in a fashion that resembles covering a circuit. Invitations are non-existent as the location of a "jam" is spread about the streets via word of the mouth. It is not necessary to know the host of

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<sup>13</sup>The reader is reminded to keep in mind the requisites for a lively service. Shouters, who like to see the house "broken up," are somewhat dependent on a participating crowd too.

a party, all one has to do is go.

The fact that street people see life as a "bitch" or as a "mutha-fucka" has nothing to do with sexual connotations. The words are merely an expression of the hostilities that life has to offer. For many, partying is an activity through which they are able to attain an emotional release.

These weeks seem like they gettin' longer and longer. I hustle and scrap to make it through the week and can't find no jams on the weekend. That makes the week seem like one long mutha-fuckin' day. Boy, Omaha is a tired ass town. It'll get you by the ass if you let it.

The cathartic function is much the same as that found in the church. It contains elements of involvement, an opportunity to express to others how good one feels, and a chance to let yourself go. The ways of the shouters and the ecstatic event are the religious counterparts to the secular "jam." The activities coincide with one another in feeling but not in meaning.

The Urban Blues; An Interpretation of  
Life at the Crossroads

The music that puts the crowd in a partying mood is mostly devoid of lyrics. The emphasis is on the beat and a strong rhythmic background. Rhythm and blues artist James Brown is the most notable maker of "jams you can party too." His music has a noticeable absence of words, lots of

screaming and shouting, and an abundance of rhythm to dance by. In sum, meaning is not as important as feeling. The lyrics that do appear are not complete sentences but are, instead, phrases which suggest feelings. The phrases serve as a background to the music and are repeated throughout the song.

I want to get down, I want to get funky!  
I want to get down, I want to get funky!  
Ready! Hit it! Do you want to get down,  
Do you want to get funky!

The lyrics are then followed by a long period of nothing but music. Different members of the band are called by the leader of the group and they respond by way of an instrumental solo or by way of verbal exchanges.

Quite different from the music of the rhythm and blues artists is the urban blues. The folk blues has been rejuvenated in the sense that electrical guitars have replaced wooden ones, and the artist now has a back-up band which contains a wide variety of instruments. The changes have pushed older blues singers, such as B.B. King and John Lee Hooker, to new heights of popularity in the black community and in the music world in general. The addition of modern musical instruments and the emergence of an inner-city blues, provides those who like to party with the necessary rhythm. But the urban blues is still the blues and it speaks about the troubles of living in the inner city. The

music of B.B. King is a parallel to spirituals that give mention to the trials and tribulations of the churched.<sup>14</sup>

Woke up this morning after another one of those crazy dreams. Oh, nothing is going right this morning, the whole world is wrong it seems.

Oh, I guess its the chains that bind me. I can't shake a loose these chains and thangs. Got to go to work this morning, seems like every thing is lost. I got a cold hearted wrong doing woman and a slave driving boss.

I can't loose these chains that bind me. I can't shake a loose these chains and thangs. You talk about hard luck and trouble, seems to be my middle name. All the odds are against me, I can only play a loosin' game. Just can't loose these chains and thangs. Oh! these chains that bind me.

Whether its B.B. King singing about "These Chains and Things," John Lee Hookers updated version of "House Rent Boogie," or Stevey Wonder's "Living for the City," the urban blues contains both the necessary rhythm to produce feeling and lyrics that are filled with meaning. Blues lyrics, for older street people, represent an expression of the cultural content of living at the crossroads. For them partying involves more than the frenzied state of dancing. While others dance, they are prone to sit back and absorb the lyrics.

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<sup>14</sup>This song can be found in its entirety on the album "Indianola Mississippi Seeds" by B.B. King. ABC Records, Inc./copyright 1970.



The urban blues is a facilitator of an emotional catharsis for the unchurched occupants of the streets. It is not unusual to see them up bright and early on Sunday mornings partying the weekend away. The majority of street people share one common characteristic -- they all keep a perpetual state of the blues. Blues singers themselves have emerged out of the Black Church and have, for the most part, spent time at the crossroads. The combination of living experiences has resulted in a secular musical form that carries out the same function as its sacred counterpart. There are many musicologists who will agree that the difference between the blues and religious music was never sharp.

Music is a cultural artifact and by analyzing the lyrical content (or in the case of some rhythm and blues, the lack of lyrics) it is possible to gain an understanding of the social conditions of a people. The music found on the juke boxes up and down 24th Street is no exception. It is conducive for a catharsis by letting individuals display feelings or by arousing emotions through references to a troubled world. The latter form of release comes about when there are commonalities between what the artist is singing about and one's personal biography. What a performer sings about, and personal biographies, cannot be divorced from culture and cultural conditions (i.e., social, economic, and political).

### Oratory Skills and the Church

Charles V. Hamilton devoted attention to the oral nature of black culture by saying, "the black culture is characterized by an oral tradition; ideas are traditionally transmitted orally, not through the written word."<sup>15</sup> In our investigation of the church (St. Paul) we found evidence which lends support to Hamilton's speculation. The minister's sermon, testimony by worshipers, recitations, the long prayers delivered by deacons, and the clergy's ability to produce verbal responses from the congregation are all activities which require oratory skills. The combination of what a minister says and how he says it are determined by his ability to put together sentences and phrases. If he does it well enough, he becomes a drawing card and worshipers describe him by saying, "that man's something else." Or they respond to his cleverness with the expression, "tell it . . . go head on and tell it." Certain individuals, by virtue of their oratory skills are allocated varying amounts of status.

Worshipers who are "trained up" in the church are constantly exposed to opportunities to witness others

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<sup>15</sup>Charles V. Hamilton, The Black Preacher in America (New York: William Monroe, Inc., 1972), p. 28.

demonstrate their oral skills. At the same time, through such events as the recitation of poems, acting as M.C. for various functions, and oratory contest, they are given an ample number of occasions to develop their own. The following announcement is symbolic of those dealing with oratory contests. This particular one is billed as the "King and Queen Oratorical Contest."

The representatives from St. Paul will be Miss Betty Daniels. All those that can -- please give her your support. The King and Queen Contest will be this afternoon at 3:30 at Zion Baptist Church. The topic will be "Biblical Responses to Contemporary Problems." However, the results of this contest we, St. Paul, congratulate our own Betty Daniels for representing us. We are proud of you!

The oratory skills of an individual is a symbol of church pride and contest winners are honored in the presence of the entire congregation. Talented persons are also given a slot of time, during the worship service to perfect their skills. In the words of the minister, "we have to be patient with our children and bring em along slowly; who knows, we might have another Henry Kissinger in this church."

The congregation is not interested in "another Henry Kissinger" as much as they are the entertainment derived from listening to clever phrases and imaginative analogies.

(1) When you need God . . . just pick up the phone in your bussom and dial one, one, one. That's one, one, one. One father,

One son, and One Holy Ghos'!

or

- (2) Mother and father used to take sacks of cotton seeds and put them out in the barn to dry. Y'all know what a cotton seed is, you ain't raised no lawn all you lives now! If he didn't plant these seeds they wouldn't grow. If we don't plant this lesson in our hearts . . . we won't grow as Christians. Not planting this lesson is like leaving the seeds in the sack.

### Oratory Skills and the Street People

The minister's oratory abilities draw a large number of action seekers to the church. Street groups that gather in the immediate neighborhood listen enthusiastically to Sunday worship services. They are attracted to the broadcast because, in their words, "Rev. Green talks plenty of shit."

Oratory skills are held in high esteem among street people. One's way with words can be an entertainment tool, a way of "gettin over," and a route to the acquiring of status.

Verbal skills are so much a part of black culture that many are of an unconscious nature. Many more are, however, deliberate and aimed at achieving an intended purpose. The latter type are the ones we wish to investigate. Street people themselves have an awareness of the importance of deliberate verbal artistry in their lives. This awareness led one pool hall patron to comment thusly:

The man's a true nigga. He talks and bull-shits his people and bull-shits with his people. Just like them dam preachers. They bull-shit them sisters to death . . . until they get caught in they stuff.

Just as not all blacks are church-goers, not all of them occupy street corners. Likewise, not all street corner people are verbally gifted. The ensuing pages are a presentation of a few of the most verbally skilled actors playing a role within the context of certain situations. The oratory skills of street corner men and women are expressed through the medium known as "talking shit." The data we have collected, but more importantly, the circumstances under which it was collected, suggest that street oratory is connected to living in "a world of trouble" or "spendin time at the crossroads."<sup>16</sup>

a) "Talkin' Shit"

"Talkin' Shit" is a conscious effort at entertaining members of a small group. If members spent several hours together, they all at one time or another assume the role of primary actor. The primary actor takes the lead in initiating

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<sup>16</sup>The circumstances under which data was collected is important to the claim of oral skills being connected to "a troubled world." In most cases, participants in verbal games were faced with the constant monotony of ghetto life. Verbal skills provided a momentary release from the immediate present.

a conversation and others, as they become aware of his intentions, join in. With the participation of these "others," a contest like situation develops as each participant tries to be as clever or as witty as his counterparts.

Oftentimes the monotony of a day casts a gloomy feeling over the members of a small street group. Amidst the gloomy atmosphere one actor will strike up a conversation resembling the following one.

Russell: "Michael," you waitin' for the mailman to bring that check ain't you. Only two more days. If I were you I woulda started talkin' shit fō (4) days ago.

The last comment draws Hamp into the conversation as he responds in support of Russell's statement.

Hamp: Yea . . . uhh huh!!

Russell: Boy he ain't gon be able to sleep on the night of the 31st. Yea . . . I'd be restless too if I had comin' what you got comin' in. (Reference is to amount of check.) I'd start talkin' shit from the second of every month (from check day-to-check day). I'd tell everybod . . . "yea, and I got another one comin' in on the 31st mutha-fucka. That government money too!!! God-dam!!

Hamp: What you say Russell?!!

Russell: That's why the nigga heads hung down like that.

Hamp: Yea . . . with that much money, I'd be laid back. Shit . . . I'd buy me a stash. A couple of pounds of that good dope! Couldn't nobody tell me

shit then. Then I could spend half of the next 30 days gettin' high, and the next half sleepin'. Just waitin' for the mailman to come through.

Michael: (rejuvenated he smiles and jokingly says)  
Hey man, fuck y'all . . . you niggas talkin' shit that's all.

Michael, the group member being addressed is the recipient of Veterans Benefits as a result of military-related medical problems. Russell, and then Hamp, try to cheer him up by transgressing from the drabness of the present to the future. In cheering up Michael, he (Russell) shook the others out of their gloominess as they either joined in the conversation or were mildly amused by it.

b) "Signifyin'" or "Co-signin'"

The art of signifying or co-signing take place in a small group context and involves verbal exchanges between the two contestants and the audience as well. By way of a superficial comparison, the activity parallels the call and response pattern that is found in the Black Church. That is, one actor addresses his opponent and when he says something clever -- the listening audience responds. They sometimes respond automatically to whatever is said in order to keep the contest going. The usual responses are: "don't be so mean," "ease up," "why you want to come down so hard on the man," "lighten up," "don't talk about the man like that," or "Oh, that was cold." Each of these phrases is a

verbal attempt to intensify the contest between the two actors; the audience is neutral as they give support to both sides. The audience also responds in a physical manner. The co-signer, after emitting what he considers to be a clever phrase, calls upon them by extending an open palm or a closed fist. One or more of the participants will then slap the open hand with a graceful sweeping motion as he proclaims, "right on."

The audience also plays a part in controlling the tempo of the co-signing. Where neither party is performing to their satisfaction, an actor from the audience will try to put a little spirit in the contest by becoming a contemporary co-signer himself. He will become the chief actor long enough to giving one of the original co-signers a pep talk. New life can be put into a contest by the temporary co-signer stating: "Dam Sweets, the man's comin' down funky on you, he talkin' about you like a dog." The temporary co-signer may then continue: "I wouldn't let that dog shit eatin' bitch talk to me like that." Thus, the role of the audience is an inducing one. They switch back and forth from side to side lending their verbal and physical support to intensify the action.

Reese (speaking to Gloria):

Ain't nothin' wrong with my hair. You ain't got nothin' to say about nobody's hair as bad as yo' shit is. Nigga you got surrender hair (he then glances to the audience for a response).



Member of the Audience: What? . . . surrender hair! Gon and tell us what surrender hair is man.

Reese: (the stage is set, he has a witnessing and participating audience and can now come on strong. Gloria hasn't replied yet; though the contest is set up, it hasn't began yet.)

"Yeah, Bitch . . . you got surrender hair. Everytime you try to comb the shit . . . you have to give up."

Member of the audience: Dam Gloria, you hear what he said about you? I ain't no Indian but that sounded like war talk to me!

Gloria: That's alright . . . at least I try to comb mine. Yours is so tight on your head its rolled like okra. Nigga you got mailman's hair . . . every nap has its own route. But yō momma's hair is alright cause the bitch is bald headed.

Member of the audience: Ahh shit, the man ain't said nothin' about your momma; why you gotta bring his family into this? If the man's momma is fucked up she fucked up, it ain't yō business. Lighten up Gloria! Don't be so mean!

Reese: Hold it now Gloria, I don't play the dozen with nobody. You can leave my family out of this.

Gloria and the audience have now pushed the contest in a new direction. Instead of co-signing the contestants have moved closer to the activity of talking about each other's mothers. The activity is an off-shoot of co-signing and is known as, "playin' the dozens." Since the contest can get quite personal, only the most skillful verbal artists are willing to participate in it.

With the inclusion of his family in the conversation Reese ended the contest. Not so much out of respect for his mother for although her name is mentioned, it is not a verbal attack on her. His mother's name would have been used to downgrade himself (i.e., "if yō mother is jive, you must be a jive nigga too").

The emphasis on negative traits has nothing to do with one's personal feelings toward his opponents. Nor does such emphasizing indicate a lack of pride in the racial traits which the participants display. Instead, the sole aim is to force a response from your opponent. Co-signing is a collective venture which is characterized by spontaneity. When small groups have no other means of escape from the monotony that surrounds them, it provides a momentary source of entertainment.

c) "On Front Street": An Outcome of Co-signing

Chapter II pointed out that: action seekers were appreciative of the manner in which ministers were able to put worshipers on the spot. The sudden embarrassment that accompanied "grilling" served as a source of entertainment. Grilling has its street corner counterpart in the form of "frontin' off." Street corner actors derive pleasure from seeing others, but not themselves, get put on front street. The success of the art lies in an actor's ability to take his opponent by surprise. To catch an adversary off guard,

and therefore minimize the chances of a response, the subject matter is not restricted to the nicety of life. The opponent's goal is to take himself off front street and put their counterpart there by producing crowd pleasing responses. The crowd participates very little as they become more of an appreciative rather than an involved audience. Putting an individual on front street is done in a loud manner; this way the initiator of the act can take advantage of the psychological pressures stemming from the presence of a crowd. The purpose of the activity is, again, to create a contest.

Imagine, if you will, a hot summer evening with nothing special to do. A crowd has gathered on the corner to escape the heat of the projects, some run nervously about looking desperately for the "bean man," the barbituate sellers who gather around street corners. Others are there to sell "hot" merchandise, to "pull some bitches," and to look for the "happenings." Added to these people are those who are in search of excitement. In the words of the proprietor they are, "waitin' for somethin' to die, but they know good and well won't nothin' die unless you kill it." The climate is, to say the least, a permissive one. Men and women have practically assumed equal status as they banty about on even terms. One actor turns to a group of friends and says, "watch this, watch me front this bitch off." The small

group laughs, and he yells loudly across the street to a lady sitting on the hood of a parked car.

Actor: Hey, Helen!

Helen: What?

Actor: Why don't you let me have some of that thang you settin' on?

Helen is now on front street. She has become the center of attention as the others on the corner are jogged out of their nightly routine and take notice. As an old street-corner saying goes, "everybody got quiet, even the juke box stopped playin', and listened." Everyone is waiting for Helen to reply. And she does in a firm manner.

Helen: You can't handle this . . . it's too much for one nigga.

Actor: I am gon get some of that thang yet!

Helen: Thang so?

Actor: Oh yea! Uh huh! yea!

Helen: If you can make it worth my time (referring to money), I can make it worth your while.

A third actor: You better leave her alone, she don't need no fuckin' with.

With the intrusion of the third party the tide has turned and the small group apparently feels that Helen has not only vindicated herself but has succeeded in putting her attacker on front street. The attacker feels much the same way and a member of his group enhances his uncertainty

by exclaiming, "that's a cold blooded bitch man, you better leave her alone!" Not to be outdone the attacker comes back stronger than ever. But this time he attempts to back off and approaches the situation in a different manner. For he must now get off front street.

Actor: Kiss my ass bitch!

Helen: Yea, ok. I'll bring em to you about the fifth of next month. Make it the seventh, I'll wrap em up in a plastic bag. All seven of em! I'll be sure to close it real tight . . . so none of the air gets out (the crowd breaks out in laughter and cat-calls as they realize she's talking about feminine napkins).

Actor: Fuck you bitch! I bet they'll smell like fifty goats too! (she comes across the street, they both laugh and then begin a normal round of conversation. The crowd also emits a final laugh and then becomes engrossed in their normal routine).

The previous conversation was not in reference to sex as an activity. Sex was used as an object in the furthering of a contest. Sex to street people is not a taboo subject matter -- it's a fact of life. In the hustle-a-day world it is discussed without reference to incest.

In addition to being a source of entertainment, putting people on front street is employed by various actors to show a mastery of the world around them. Just as the minister controls his congregation, some street people utilize front street tactics to maintain their eliteness by forever keeping other's treading lightly. Other actors

will move cautiously if there's a possibility of them being put on front street. To be put on front street for all to see, is a "cramp" in one's "style."

d) "Wolfin"

"Wolfin" is an overt expression of the worth of one's self as an individual. It is a clear statement of a person's abilities in relation to the abilities of other actors. Mohhamed Ali, startled all of white America with his public decrees of what he would do to an opponent in an upcoming fight. But to a portion of Black America, his verbal exhibition was "just like the niggas on the street."

A facsimile of "wolfin" can also be found in the church. Throughout the course of the research enterprise, I witnessed a number of preachers telling the congregation of their preaching abilities. The familiar statement, "bring your shoutin' shoes," concerns how well a given preacher thinks he'll perform.

On the streets, whether in pool rooms, bars, or on the basketball court, there are persons who loudly verbalize their potential while down playing the abilities of an opponent. Boasting about one's personal exploits facilitates the development of a verbal contest, and therefore, is a source of entertainment. The person doing the "wolfin" is an opportunist: he waits for a lull in the day's activities

and loudly shouts his challenge so as to become a primary actor. In this particular instance, the situation is a "school ground" basketball game.

We got a whole row of turkeys hear for me today! Some with money! Some without money! Some ain't never had no money, and some ain't never gon have no money! Which one of you mutha fuckin' turkeys wants me today? Just what I thought . . . none of ya. You'd rather put on gasoline underwear and run through hell, than fuck with me.

The individual speaking in such an aggressive manner is not an athlete. Nor is he expected to back up his challenges. The audience accepts him for what he is -- a source of entertainment. To increase the merriment, one or two bystanders will on occasion respond to his challenge. The responder becomes a primary actor in that he either enters into a verbal contest with the individual or plays the role of a straight man (by setting the wolfer up for answers). At any rate, the primary actor is not taken seriously by either the players or the audience. In this particular case the individual receives notoriety from his "wolfin" abilities rather than from his athletic talents.

#### e) Street Corner Testimony

Whereas band members offer up testimony regarding what the lord has done for them and shouters testify to how they feel, street people display an altogether different form of testimony. Their's is not of a religious quality but

involves the expression of the effect that a given "high" has had on them. Drug-related testimonies have three observable results. They give the testifier status, they make him "one of the regulars," and they can be used by the young entrepreneur who is selling a certain drug. The actual testimony is, in many respects, an exaggeration of the effect the drug has had on an individual.

Oh man! I am fucked up! I am higher than eleven mutha fuckin' eagles. Ain't a nigga out North keeps his head as bad as mine. I stay high, I keeps that good dope in me.

Status is given to the individual who "always keeps a stash." No one really sees a quantity of drugs as the real indicator is the person himself. He must not only be "high," but outwardly demonstrate it as well (i.e., exaggerated nodding while setting and "coasting," sniffing mannerisms, and of course verbal discussion). Testimony is not a private matter -- it is done loud enough for everyone to hear. In the absence of other status symbols, the ability to afford the money to purchase a "high" receives special recognition. The notion that he is able to satisfy his needs, without working, implies that he has some kind of a "hustle" going. So, it is the capacity to get "high" and not the act of being high which brings a measure of respect.

Brown's always in good shape, His money's always right. My man can get his head bad anytime. He must be doin' somethin' they don't know about downtown (police). He ain't



like the rest of these dudes around here.  
 The mutha fucka ain't half stepin' . . .  
 he ain't bull-shitin' a pound. Even if  
 he is a dog ass nigga . . . you gotta give  
 em a little respect.

One of the ways of being classified as "one of the regulars" is to do what they do. This includes getting high. The practice is verbally communicated by paraphrasing a portion of an expression coined by rhythm and blues artist Curtis Mayfield.

Everybody alive on these streets is  
 keepin' goin' by shootin', snortin',  
 snifin', puffin', popin', drinkin', or  
 dropin' somethin'.

Along with getting high, an actor recounts the details of when, where, and how, to his peers. A great number of the stories are an exaggeration but are, nonetheless, an effective device for selling one's self as "street-wise." The recounting of experiences is used by band members to "show em by tellin' em." In street groups drug-related testimonies fulfill the same function. They are, as Ed Lee so descriptively put it, a way of conveying to peers that you are indeed capable of "runin' with the big boys."

Ministers are frequently guilty of selecting persons from the audience to help sell his product. They call upon worshipers to testify to the goodness of religion in order to reinforce their sales pitch. Any good drug pusher does the same thing. Upon receiving a new supply of whatever it is

he's selling, he will "turn a few people on." These people are usually considered stable members of the street community and their opinions about drugs are respected. When it comes time for the pusher to sell his product he often does what the minister does. He calls for testimony from individuals who can bear witness to his product; persons who have had personal experience with what is being sold.

Pusher: Man the dopes good. I don't fuck with no turkey, I am tryin' to make a livin'. I can't be sellin' no turkey and have these niggas out hear huntin' for me. If the dope don't get you off . . . you know you can get yo money back.

The customer is reluctant to purchase the product but the pusher knows he wants to buy. Meanwhile, a small group of potential customers have gathered but they too are skeptical. Rather than miss a sale, he picks a witness from the audience to testify.

Pusher: Hey! Boobie. Tell em how bad my shit is.

Boobie: Oh, man!!! This nigga got some dynamite herb! I mean it's together. Last night I smoked half a joint and couldn't finish the rest. All ya'll know I am a dope smokin' nigga. I am a two hit man. If two hits don't get me off, I don't even fuck with it. This herb had me high and talkin' much shit to these short haired bitches around hear. I even pulled me a hōe last night. Shit . . . don't tell me that smoke ain't ready. He got some bad ass dope; it's tougher than a big-dog.

Whether or not the product produced the above results is of little importance. But one thing is certain, the pusher manipulated the testimony to peddle his product. This, in a round about way, parallels the minister's use of testimony (i.e., we ask the reader to examine the minister's use of the shooting victim, in Chapter VIII, to "show who God is and what he can do"). Both use testimony to reaffirm the doubts of those on the fringe. Street testimony is a watered down version of the call and response pattern. The pusher makes a deliberate call and the testifier reinforces what he has already said about his product.

#### A "Crap-Game": A Combination of oratory Skills

A friendly crap game between close friends, for money but mostly for something to do, is a spontaneous happening on street corners. Again, when the relentless boredom sets in, an actor will take a pair of dice from his pocket and quietly begin playing with them. Soon the interest of the group turns to the clicking sounds produced by the shaking of the dice. The person in possession of the white objects will then toss them and in a joking manner proclaim, "shoot a dollar." Another actor will jokingly respond, "bet." Before long, whether the action takes place in an alley, on the side of a building, on the sidewalk, or on the hood of a car, the game is on the way. The small

crowd forms a circle around the shooters; although all are not betters they will become participants in a verbal sense.

Now and then an occasional patrol car comes past and the cry, "hear comes the man," is heard and the game is temporarily halted. When a game has gotten intense and the authorities are sighted, the cry is disregarded. If the "pot is right," and a patrol car stops to instruct players to end the game, it is not unusual for one of the participants to keep one eye on the game, glance over his shoulder, and sternly tell the officers to "go fuck yourself." With the protective circle around him, the game continues as the patrolmen realize that the cost of breaking up the game is too great and slowly drive away.

Crap games involve more than a chance to "make some quick money." They too break the monotony of the day and are a form of entertainment. Entertainment is derived from a mixed combination of verbal skills. Wolfing, talking shit, front street, and co-signing emerge, either independently or in conjunction with one another, during the course of a crap game. Dice throwers vacillate back and forth wolfing, talking shit, and co-signing; first to the dice, then to other players, and finally to a responding audience. A more important call and response pattern takes place between the shooter and the "phaser," the person who has made a side bet that the shooter will hit. Phasers serve in the same

capacity as the Deacon Board, they verbally support the shooter. In the church, the call and response is directed at the recognition of shared experiences or the expression of clever phrases. In a crap game, the response is to a clever phrase or to "hittin' a lick." Side betters and members of the audience respond, when a lick is hit, with the traditional supportive phrases (i.e., lighten up, don't be so mean, do it to em). When the dice fail to cooperate the most familiar street corner phrase is heard -- mutha fucka!!

A crap game works a shooter into a position in which he rolls the dice and speaks to them in a manner similar to that of intoned preaching. We will present a verbal description of a game despite certain inherent drawbacks. Such an account cannot capture the fluid motion of the fast paced games for we are forced to omit the rhythm with which they move. Nor can we capture the rhythmic word pronunciation. Despite communication difficulties, it is hoped that the reader will examine the following conversations with one thing in mind; trying to pick out instances of talkin' shit to the dice, to phasers, and to the audience in general.

Tony: I am gon roll em tonight. Let me shoot em! (he picks up the dice and roll them) Six! Come on Six! Ya'll put your shit up there (money). Green makes my dick hard anyway. Have I got a better?

Side better: Shoot two he make it (he now becomes the center of attention as he responds to Tony's challenge). Role em Tony. Role tell the niggas heart stops beatin'. I don't care whose money I gets . . . all of its green. Come on dice! They taught me four and two is six all over the world. Huh! Come on dice! I want that change.

Tony "craps out": Shit!! If it wasn't for bad luck . . . I wouldn't have no mutha fuckin' luck at all.

Since Tony has craped out by failing to role his number, the dice change hands. They are now in Newby's possession.

Newby: (He snatches the dice from Tony and at the same moment turns to the audience while addressing Tony.)

Get off the dice . . . bitch made mutha fucka! Man . . . I am hotter than a two dollar pistol.

Response from audience: Get down Newby.

Newby continues: Come on mama! You better put your bets down cause I am gonna (he roles the dice) Six baby! Almost hit. That's my number . . . come on six!

Response from Side better: Jump on em seven! Jump dead in his ass seven! Bet two he don't hit. You been on the dice too long! You been on the dice too long nigga! Fuck em dice! Fuck em dice!

Response from audience in support of side better: Fuck with him dice, do it to him. He ain't shit no way. Come on dice, knock the nigga's dick string up in his watch pocket! Fuck em dice!

Another member of the audience responds to side better who is still contesting Newby:

You can't beat this nigga, Newby! His money is too long. He got so many twenty dollar bills, he can stick em up his ass, shit money for a week, and still have some to wipe his ass with. (Everyone in the audience laughs and responds with a round of "don't be so mean," "don't come down so funky man," "that was mighty chilly.")

Newby's luck runs out as the last responses are heard from the audience. He surrenders the dice as he is subjected to a last bit of verbal abuse from the next shooter who grasps the dice and says:

You quitin' Newby? Get on then O' broke ass nigga. You subject to get the rest of yo money took . . . and a ass whipin' for lettin' me win it.

Newby is now out of the game but makes a final comment to the shooter.

Nigga, you got to bring some ass to get some ass. You fuck around with me and you'll catch a headache nigga! Yō gun ain't no bigger than mine and I know it don't shoot no harder.

Having gracefully exited from the game, Newby turns to the audience before vacating the street corner. He reaches into his pocket, takes out a "bank roll," holds it up for everyone to see, and then makes a final remark.

Fuck you niggas. Fuck all you niggas. . . right where the lord split ya! I am suppose to win. If Newby don't get his, grits ain't grocery, eggs ain't poultry, and popeye's a punk. I can't lose and give up my money. I ain't given up nothin' but hard dick and

bubble gum . . . and I am fresh out of bubble gum! (with this last statement, he walks away leaving the audience amused).

The preceding verbal exchanges were perhaps a five minute segment of a crap game. It is characterized by co-signing but more so by clever phrases and wolfing. Wolfing entertains the audience, and at the same instance, when coupled with co-signing takes the participant's mind off of the game. The experienced crap shooter is, by "loud talking," able to break an opponent's concentration and thus cheat a little bit.

Wolfing progresses into what is referred to as "bōgardin'." Bogarding is the act of taking something without the use of physical force. There is no need for physical force because of the verbal presentation of an actor. When there is a dispute over money in a crap game, the person in the wrong stands a chance of collecting the pot if he wolfs loud enough and simultaneously picks up the money. If he "loud talks" with a degree of steerness, the other participants will likely not dispute his claim.

Street people I have talked to regard some ministers as "bogards." The tag is applied to those who handle the congregation as if they were sheep (i.e., the extreme tactics used in the collection of offering and the assignment of duties to new recruits).



Crap games are a part of the daily hustle for many street people but the verbal aspects of the activity indicate that money is not the only thing that actors exchange with one another. The audiences that gather around crap games have no monetary investment. Their interest is in listening, and occasionally, in entering the game as verbal participants. As a cultural artifact, oratory skills and live music are enjoyed by Blacks whether they find themselves in a church setting or in the social system of the street corner.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE METRO ENVIRONMENT: "THE WHITE FOLKS DOWNTOWN"

The nature of the activities carried on within the church setting dictates the extent to which it must be in contact with groups and organizations located outside of the black community. The attainment of strength for "another day's journey," the search for soul salvation, the seeking of action, and the achievement of an emotional catharsis are goals that shape the form and content of activities within St. Paul. The goals are realizable only if the necessary resources are available either within the church itself or through church-environmental relationships. With respect to the metro environmental sector, we find that: the ends of the various sub-groups are realizable without substantial ties with metropolitan Omaha. In fact, during the span of our research, the church showed collective concern with bodies or organization located beyond the black community only once.

Without a doubt, each congregation member has numerous ties with organizational forms found in the greater metropolitan area. But the research interest is not in the connectedness of individuals to metropolitan Omaha. Nor is

the focus of attention on the relatedness of each sub-group to the metro area. The task is to investigate the relation of the metropolitan environment to the church as a whole.

A single incident will be presented to demonstrate the relationship between St. Paul and bodies lying beyond the geographical confines of "North Omaha." The incident itself, the need for basic utilities, is of little importance. It is overshadowed by the significance of the situational factors which gave birth to the utility problem. Situational factors are worth noting if one is to understand how the church adapts to environmentally imposed stresses.

#### Situational Factors behind the Utilities Problem

The need for basic utilities is a normal prerequisite for churches and other businesses and organizations as well. The normality of the need means that businesses and organizations carefully plan budgets so that gas, lights, and water are provided on a continuing basis. A unique characteristic of Baptist churches in general, and St. Paul specifically, is responsible for turning the mundane need for basic utilities into a crisis situation. The characteristic we are speaking of is that of church schisms. To fully understand what this means in St. Paul's instance, it is necessary to reconstruct a portion of the church's history.

St. Paul, like most other small black churches, has undergone a series of economic changes in its efforts to become what it is today. Under the leadership of the Rev. D.J. Green, St. Paul has, in eighteen years, progressed from a house church to a store front and finally into a main-line type of church building. It was in the home of one of the church "mothers" that the small band of believers first began the struggle to build a church. When their economic fortunes took a turn for the better, the band moved from the mother's home into a small store front. It was during this period that the small congregation built a substantial membership. The growing church was ambitious enough to put into action their hopes for a new church building.

The new building was not to be a purchase but an investment. The project was to be initiated by three methods, loans from agencies in the metro area, a fund drive sponsored by the church, and personal pledges made by each respective member. Of the three methods, we shall see that the latter is the most important in the utilities incident.

After putting the three methods into operation, a sight was selected and floor plans were drawn up and carried out. Seventeen years after the small band had begun their work in the home of a member, they now had a new church building to worship in. They had succeeded in building their sought after "church home." For a year things were

proceeding along in a desirable manner; the congregation had to work at making ends meet but they were nevertheless making them meet. Then, the unforeseen happened . . . a church schism. Deacon Galvin, one of the founders of the original church, saw the schism as having the following impact.

The church is in bad shape . . . at one time the church was in better shape. It grew and was prosperous. And then Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ took part of the church with him. St. Pauls been strugglin' every since. With the Lord's help, we'll make it though.

Church schisms are not uncommon among small black churches.<sup>1</sup> Their causes may vary but the outcome is usually the same; they are a drastic interruption to the current and future growth of a church. Schisms generally occur as a result of doctrinal disputes, in instances where the church has grown too large to adequately meet the personal needs of congregation members, where a church fails to provide proper opportunities for a group's religious expressions, and when individual ministers envision the church as a vehicle for upward mobility. St. Paul's schism is a by-product of the latter situation.

The assistant pastor and a few other officers, after

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<sup>1</sup>Charles V. Hamilton, The Black Preacher in America (New York: William Monroe, Inc., 1972), p. 72, claims that the baptist do not have the highly centralized ecclesiastical structure of some other denominations. Thus, "it is easier for a person to come along and set up his own church and start preaching."

having been trained in their various duties, separated themselves from the church, took with them a sum of money, and founded their own church. We see that this process is an important part of the growth of small churches. From the main-line church building there sprang another house church which will no doubt attempt to follow the same progressive path undertaken by all other small churches. St. Paul not only gave birth to the newly formed church but it also served as a training ground for its officials. Until prospective ministers receive the call, they preach to the congregation; not from behind the pulpit but from in front of it. After many years of what resembles an apprenticeship, a deacon is free to assemble a small band and begin his own church.

Although there was much dissension, and still is, over Rev. \_\_\_\_\_'s taking a sizeable sum of money and congregation members who were skilled in the workings of the church, the schism did not destroy business relationships. The schism is best viewed as a process which severs personal ties among church members but does very little to dissolve business ties. St. Paul lost control over a group of worshipers and with them went a stable source of income. Though part of the market has disappeared, it is still shared by the two churches. In the same light, St. Paul shares it's market with the exiles. The following excerpt was taken from an occasion which brought the voluntarily exiled members

back to St. Paul for fellowship. The speaker is the pastor of the newly formed church.

I am glad to be here this evening. As you all know this is where I started, St. Paul is my second church home. We should worship not as St. Paul or Zion Wheel, not as Methodist or Baptist, but as Christians. I would like to extend an invitation to Rev. Green and the members of St. Paul to join Lion Wheel, Friday at 7:30, in worship. The service is the beginning of our building fund drive and we cordially invite you to worship in Christian fellowship with Lion Wheel on this joyous occasion, or at any other time in the future.

A unique relationship has developed. The exiled church is placed in a situation where it is an influence upon the continual stability of St. Paul. Conversely, the band who separated themselves from St. Paul, looks to the mother church for help in its striving to become a congregation housed in a main-line type building.

#### The Utilities as a Problem

The schism created problems for St. Paul since it represented a drastic change in the numerical make-up of the church. Numbers mean revenue and the larger a church is the better it carries its financial burdens.

Each member had promised to pay a weekly fee of two dollars to meet utility expenses that would come about when the congregation moved from store front to main-line

type of church building. The amount received from weekly fees was severely reduced in that a number of members withdrew their support from St. Paul and re-channeled it to the newly emerging church. The most serious effect of the lost revenue was felt during the coldest part of the winter months.<sup>2</sup> So serious was the need to meet the cost of basic utilities that the pastor took the problem to his congregation.

I have a proposal I want to make to you this mornin'. We have been taken advantage of by the people down-town. The rich people down-town have raised our electricity and gas bill. I went downtown to see about it, but I wasn't smart enough to talk 'em out of it.

The content of the minister's proposal contains two important points. They, in effect, set the stage for the congregation's reaction to the utility problem. First, the minister has clearly separated the church from the metropolitan environment with the phrase, "the people downtown." In the next sentence the people downtown who have taken advantage of them are, in addition to other things, "rich people." Secondly, the congregation is made aware of the

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<sup>2</sup>Quite by accident, the winter period was colder than the "average" mid-western winter. Matters were further complicated as America was experiencing what officials termed an "energy-crisis." The alleged "crisis" was responsible for an increase in the price of heating fuels.



difficulties in talking to the "rich people downtown." Since this course of action (reasoning) is closed, the only viable alternative lies in the hands of the congregation. Having laid the foundations by dividing the involved parties into the wealthy bad guys and their poor counterparts, the minister proceeds with his proposal.

Our gas and electric bills have been being about ninety-dollars a month for this building. Last month it was around one hundred and fifty dollars. Another minister I talked to said his bill was two hundred and fifty dollars. Two hundred and fifty dollars a month, so I don't feel so bad. I am goin' to put ten dollars on this table over here and I am askin' the members of the church to donate what they can. Some of you haven't been comin' to church and others have been goin' to somebody else's church, so you behind in your offering anyway. God bless those who give and God bless those who wish to give and can't.

At this particular juncture the problem with the utilities is of serious concern but is not yet a crisis. The reader may ask, what distinguishes a problem from a crisis situation. In all fairness, we have to admit that the distinction is arbitrary and is the subjective evaluation of the researcher. It is felt that a problem differs from a crisis situation in that the latter results in the development of stable regulating mechanisms to handle the state of affairs. Since a crisis is a prolonged condition and those involved in it would rather not participate in it again, some form of permanent remedy is needed. The table used for

the collection represents a mechanism which enables the church to solve problems by relying upon resources found within the church. The table is always available to deal with the unforeseen. However, we will later discover that spontaneous collections are adequate for dealing with problems but crisis situations may necessitate changes in the internal structure of the church.

Transformation of the Utilities  
Problem into a Crisis

So far the minister has failed to convey, to the congregation, the seriousness of the matter. The initial reaction was not one of hostility toward the "people downtown." Instead, the mentioning of money was interpreted as another instance of "beggin' for pennies." With the utility problem mounting, the following Sunday was again devoted to rallying the church behind the issue.

I know some of you are mad at me and didn't like what I said last week. But the church . . . has certain expenses. The two dollars you pay in dues doesn't pay all the expenses of the church. Each member promised to pay \$2.00 while we were at the old church. Some of you haven't done that yet.

If a man takes in a wife, he has expenses. When they have children, he takes on added expenses. Well . . . the church is the same way. If you love your wife you'll support her. If you love your children you'll support them. And if you love

your church, you'll support it. This is your church, the money ain't goin' in Green's pockets.

Remembering that the congregational reaction to the previous weeks "proposal" was a negative one. Many felt that the minister's plea for monetary support was "beggin' for pennies." The minister, by telling the congregation of their responsibility to the church, informed them that he is not seeking to accumulate money. Whether or not he knew of the congregation's beliefs is not found in our data. It is known, however, that he receives informal feedback on the congregation's response to his positions on certain issues.<sup>3</sup> So, the first part of his lecture clarified the financial responsibility of each member. To further convey the seriousness of the problem, he again speaks of an identifiable enemy.

You can get happy all you want to, but that don't pay no gas and light bills. You can't talk to them white folks downtown, all they want is their money. They don't care about nothin' but that money . . . that green stuff! We . . . are twenty-five dollars short. I wish them folks downtown would cut down on our utility bills, but you can't talk to 'em. Instead of givin' a nigga a break . . . they tryin' to break the niggas (everybody laughs).

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<sup>3</sup>The fact is known in that the minister oftentimes bases a portion of a sermon on what he "heard." He may address a given condition on more than one occasion when his position is questioned.

The problem of utilities is now one in which the parties in conflict have been defined in even clearer terms. The first mentioning of the problem had the conflicting parties listed as the church and the rich people downtown. On the latter occasion the people downtown now become "white." Not only have the white folks downtown undergone an identity change from the utility companies to the rich people downtown, but they now have as a goal -- the extraction of revenue from a group that was previously the church but what is now the "niggas."

What we are saying is this. The minister is the most important cog in rallying his congregation behind a given cause. A cause, such as the utilities, is not enough within itself, to create a strong reaction on the part of the congregation. The congregation has the capabilities to solve the problem but they are useless until mobilized. There exists latent attitudes among the congregation in regards to the metropolitan environment. These are what allows the minister to divide the sides (a means of mobilization) on a black (have-nots) and white (haves) basis. The sum total of these latent attitudes is what colors the church's relation to the metropolitan area. The preacher is aware of them and uses his knowledge to the advantage of the organization.

The minister, by carefully working with the situation, moved the utilities incident from a problem to a crisis. He

demonstrated the need for a remedy so well that St. Paul, in the end, added to the institutional framework of the church a mechanism for forestalling the development of future utilities crises. During a business meeting (held during the crisis), a newly created office was that of . . . "Chairman of the Building Fund." In sum, the church as an organization has undergone the process of structural differentiation in its attempts to solve tensions imposed on it from the outside.

Pressures imposed on the organization during the summer months are more acute and, therefore, called the instituting of additional measures.

You know that during the summer months some of our members go on vacations. In the past we've had problems meeting our utility bills. The money saved in the Judas bags will help carry us through the summer.

Each member was given a brown paper bag and instructed to fill it with thirty pieces of silver a day, for a week. The only requirement was that there be thirty pieces of silver; in nickels, dimes, quarters, or fifty-cent pieces. Judas bags, along with a "waistline rally" and a church supper, are events which complement the institutionalized "building fund."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>A waistline rally is a contest whereby each member pledges to give a total of two cents for every pound of body weight. The rally ends in a social gathering where the winner, the one paying the most, is given a prize.

The Church vs. The Metro Area:

A Sense of We-ness

A sense of we-ness refers to the collective identification of St. Paul, by its members, as a "church home." A shaping force in the emergence of we-ness is the churches' ties with the metro area. Hostilities between church and metro environment create a set of conditions in which church members think of themselves as a unit. The minister, as we have seen, is conscious of the situation. He activates a similar awareness among its membership from behind the pulpit.

The metropolitan environment is defined, and perhaps rightfully so, as being a separate world. The congregation is periodically cautioned that: they will never be able to participate fully in the world which lies beyond the black community. The alternative to participation in life styles found in the metro area is to build a strong and viable black community. In building a viable black solidarity, the place to start is with the church. The minister and many members feel that efforts at entering into the flow of life, as it is found in the greater metropolitan area, is a waste of energy. On the contrary, the church is portrayed as an example of the positive use of energy by black folks.

The white people don't want us out there with them. We throw beer bottles and cans in our yards. Some of us get drunk and

clown. Some black folks just don't appreciate nothin'. Sometimes we throw paper on the floors, scratch up the pews, and put gum on the seats. We don't appreciate the church.

We'll spend money for wigs. We'll go downtown and spend and spend all day. But do you know . . . the church won't go no further because people don't support the Lord. This is your church. Now I don't preach for money . . . and never have. The money goes to the church. You got to take pride in your church. The church is all black folks got. We have to build here. Can't nobody take the church from the black man, it's his, it belongs to him! We got to stick together. The Jews stick together! The white man has taught our fore parents to be against one another. We must overcome this. The only way we can do this is through the church. That's the way the Jews did it.

The content of the passage divides life opportunities into racial categories. We-ness is fostered among church members by first of all reminding them that "white folks" don't want to share residency with them. They are then told to take pride in what they have built and that the church is a valid investment of time and energy. Finally, the passage mentions the advantages of we-ness. By comparing the situation of Blacks with the Jewish experience, the minister reaffirms the metro as a source of divisiveness. He further suggests that hostilities can only be overcome by building a strong church foundation and then pulling together in a united effort against the forces of oppression.

The "white folks downtown" are not so much a source of we-ness but are viewed as the reason why a sense of we-ness is necessary. Solidarity among church members is felt to be necessary if Blacks are to improve their life conditions. For the minister, it is much easier to mobilize the church population, against pressures imposed from "white folks downtown," than it is to foster a sense of we-ness among the larger population of the black community. With respect to this matter, the pastor has commented: "Jesus couldn't bring all the people together, and I ain't Jesus . . . I am just another man."

#### Other Sources of We-ness

A sense of we-ness is easily brought into existence when and if the pastor is able to activate latent attitudes that church members hold toward the metropolitan environment. However, this is not the only source of we-ness. There are, in contrast to the "white folks," a host of unintended and less recognizable activities which function to solidify the various sub-groups. Not all of these activities have to do with church-metro environment relationships. Whether hostilities stem from metropolitan Omaha or other environmental sectors, one thing is certain. Hostility, no matter what its' source, breeds a sense of we-ness. We have chosen



to include these other sources of we-ness in this chapter in order to better understand congregational cohesiveness.

A. "Livin' of the World"

Solidarity can generally be attributed to a sense of belonging. That is to say, a group cannot develop a sense of we-ness if the boundaries of the organization to which they belong are not clearly defined. The drawing of boundaries by an organization implies that something lies beyond those boundaries. What customarily lies beyond organizational domains are opportunities or alternatives to the membership offered by the community which one is a part of. In the case of St. Paul, the alternative to membership in the church is, "livin' of the world." Sister Jackson, during a testimony, illustrated the back and forth movement from church community to the secular world.

I've been gone a long time. Satan has been havin' fun. Jesus removed his handcuffs though . . . and let me return to church this mornin'. I am nearly sixty-one years old and ain't got nothin' out there (reference to the world). St. Paul is my only family.

"Livin' of the world" is what separates members of St. Paul from those who do not have a church home. Not living of the world is a full-time endeavor for the churched but the remainder of the congregation removes itself from the world for only two hours every Sunday morning. Regardless of

the depth of involvement, separation from those who live of the world is responsible for the development of a sense of we-ness.

The congregation, by sharing a Sunday morning church home, becomes a small family for the duration of the worship service. Professing to abstain from the temptations of the world, they share a common trait; a trait which distinguishes them from other community actors and at the same time binds them together into a church. Members are encouraged, by way of the covenant, to think of the church as a family in which every member agrees to "watch over one another in brotherly love, remember each other in prayer, and to aid each other in sickness and distress." The sense of we-ness is furthered by applying specific labels to persons who have drifted away from the family. "Backsliders" are a category of individuals who were previously members of the church but have withdrawn into the world. "Sinners" are those who have either never been baptized into the church or those who have undergone the ceremony but cling to the "ways of the world." Briefly put, a sense of we-ness is enforced by separating out those who are a part of St. Paul but are "backsliders," and those who are sinners, from the church.

#### B. "Tearin' down the Church"

Once the identification with St. Paul has been internalized, persons outside of the church become an active

force by exerting pressures on some, but not all, congregation members. The pastor describes the actions of outsiders by telling his congregation that: "folks don't want to see you involved in the church, when they see you doin' good work they'll tear you down everytime." Critical appraisals from non-church members, rather than drawing persons back into the world, may drive them further into the religious domain. Brother McBride is a prime example. To him, criticism from outsiders reinforces his commitment to the church.

The other day one of the fellas I work with asked me why I spend so much time doin' for St. Paul. He said he ain't never been a bible carrier and it didn't hurt him none. Well . . . I didn't know exactly what to tell him.

I wasn't upset because you get use to people tearin' down the church. I don't mind em tearin' down the church cause I know what God promised me for my services. The more I hear em tearin' down the Lord . . . the closer it brings me to him. I know the world is full of sin . . . the bible tells you that, and when I hear folks talkin' about the church in a bad way, I know its wrong. Just knowin' this is what makes me do for St. Paul.

Solidarity increases because the most religiously committed congregation members believe that "folks crucify the church." Crucifixion, whether real or not, is seen in the eyes of church members as being responsible for the formation of new social relations among the churched and the

breaking off of relations with the un-churched. To describe this phenomenon, congregation members make use of the spiritual, "Since I Lay My Burden Down." Quoting the spiritual they refer to changes in their social relations by saying, "my friends don't treat me like they used to since I laid my burdens down."

The minister is quite skillful at playing the world of the church against the non-church world. To him, folks who crucify the church are a useful tool in drawing the congregation closer together. Outsider pressures, when purposely played upon, force individual worshipers deeper into the church world. When you're "crucified" in the outside world the home is the place to seek sanctuary, and "like a home the church is always open."

### C. "Folks is Dyin' Everywhere"

Besides "crucifixion" of the church, there are other external pressures which add to group cohesiveness. The wave of crime which is characteristic of inner-city areas is an example. As news of assorted criminal activities enters into the church (i.e., a typical example is the recent church slaying of the mother of Martin Luther King, Jr.), the minister interprets and re-defines the event.

Folks is dyin' everywhere! The only way we can get through it is with the church. Death is everywhere. Everytime we take one step . . . death takes two. We better try and get closer to God.

"Folks is dyin' everywhere" is a response, by the minister, which is heard in conjunction with a number of current events. It reminds the congregation that death is all about them. The citing of tragic events enables the pastor to caution his congregation about their closeness to God. The church, in reacting to the warning, are like a herd of sheep who are temporarily frightened and thus huddle together. They are drawn together in hope that the church will provide sanctuary. External pressures which hint at danger, heighten the religiosity of worshipers and create a sense of togetherness by developing the idea that -- a church home is also God's house and stands between death on the outside world and the congregation.

D. "Down Home Stories"

The metro environment is merely a mirror image of the dominant culture. The area is a micro unit which contains the same racial attitudes as the whole of society. The oppressive qualities of American culture are then played out as church members come in contact with metropolitan Omaha. For this reason it is believed that the "down home stories" told in church have to do with the metro environment, even though they took place in a different part of the country.

The "white folks downtown" probably refers to no

specific person or groups of persons. Instead, it is a catch all phrase which brings to light the many inadequacies in the social structure which make social inequality possible. Down home stories bring to the surface the many shared experiences which tie members of St. Paul together in a struggle. The struggle is against the social structure of America and is important here because the metro environment is a microcosm of that very structure. Stories about down home give worshipers a sense of we-ness; as a church and as an oppressed people.

I ain't forgot, I remember when the man had us workin' in the cotton fields. Some of you may have forgotten what it was like down-home . . . but I haven't. There appeared to be crystal jewels drippin' from our shiny black faces. But these weren't jewels but beads of perspiration. He worked us from one end of the field to the next. I can remember puttin' leaves on the top of water buckets to keep the water cool. We've come a long ways . . . God has brought us mighty long ways.

The term "the man" is used in place of "the white folks downtown." Hostility is then between "us" and the "man." The phraseology, "I ain't forgot," challenges listeners to never forget the social heritage from which they have progressed. A sense of we-ness as a people is an implicit component of the passage. Not only are Blacks viewed as a people by virtue of their common struggles but they are perhaps seen as a chosen people, a special people.

Special from the standpoint that God is on their side as they struggle to overcome the barbarous conditions forced upon them by the "man."

### Conclusion

Greater metropolitan Omaha is the environmental sector to which St. Paul is least connected. If we reflect upon the previous chapters, the conditions allowing for this relative autonomy becomes clearer. The needs of the three sub-groups within the church, economic sustenance, and the need for recruits, are all sufficiently handled either within the church itself or by resources found in the black community.

To handle the stresses imposed by contact with the metro environment, the system simply makes use of its identity as a church home. Armed with this sense of we-ness, the organization is able to develop internal mechanisms to remedy the situation. When the problem is a persistent one (a crisis), the mechanisms can become part of the institutional framework.

The congregational solidarity which the minister is able to develop, by way of frequent references to the "white folks downtown," is a situational affair. That is, the definition of the metro area varies with the effect the

minister is trying to create. Although attributing negative qualities to inhabitants of the metro environment in order to raise the utilities problem to a position of importance, he must on other occasions maintain a Christian attitude toward all people.

As Christians we should be led by the spirit. White folks have done us wrong because they've had the wrong spirit toward us. But as we've grown to know and understand one another, their spirit has begun to change. Don't get me wrong now . . . they still got a long ways to go. It's not the color that determines the nature of the spirit, it's the amount of Christianity we carries in us.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FUSION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS: "MAINTAINING A SENSE OF HISTORY"

#### The Church as a Race Institution

Struggling against a hostile environment can either be done individually or by a significant number of individuals coming together in a collective manner. The latter approach is the most effective means of struggle but is a most difficult state to achieve since it requires organization. However, in order for "a people" to subsist, organization is a survival imperative. The black community has the church as a major organizational form; yet it has not been able to bring people in the community together for concerted political action.

Theoreticians, theologians, and political activists have speculated on, complimented, and condemned the Black Church in recent decades. Drake and Cayton, as early as 1945, wrote of the potential of the Black Church as a "race institution" and further suggested that, it "need not undergo drastic altercations to be pushed into the political arena."<sup>1</sup> The Black Church is a "race institution" because it

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<sup>1</sup>Clair St. Drake, and Horace R. Cayton, Black

has incorporated into its structure the elements of black culture. Among these elements is the concept of continual struggle. The church has also been responsible for the development of black leadership. Black preachers are among the most gifted persons in the black community. Their effectiveness is attributed to their oneness with the people; they are a by-product of the cultural style of the masses. Charles V. Hamilton describes this phenomena in the following way:<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the black preacher, then, has been the fact that he has been the major figure to combine the movement of the masses with the cultural style of those masses. The culture has been heavily religious in substance.

The church as a "race institution," and the role of the black minister, reached its' zenith during the reign of Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. From the middle 50's until his untimely assassination in the late 1960's the Black Church loomed as a dominant political force. There were, however, emerging from the style of Malcolm X, a new set of black activists.

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(Cont.) Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City (New York: Harper and Row, 1945), p. 424.

<sup>2</sup>Charles V. Hamilton, The Black Preacher in America (New York: William Monroe, Inc., 1972), p. 221.

Stokeley Carmichael, Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, H. "Rap" Brown, and others were dissatisfied with the role of the church. They sought to build an organization which would take into account, and thus heal, the existing disjuncture between religion and politics. They moved away from religion and the church, and while doing so, took their politics to the streets.

The death of King, and the destruction of the organizational forms which accompanied the Black Power Movement, has left the political struggle of the black community - and America in general - in a state of flux.<sup>3</sup> The struggle has not ceased, however. For there are black politicians, lawyers, and other professionals who have assumed new roles. Black theologians are at work trying to build a new theoretical basis for a "Black religion" that is action-oriented rather than other worldly.<sup>4</sup>

Surviving through the turmoil of the late 60's and

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<sup>3</sup>Though the Black Panther Party is still in existence, times have changed and it no longer maintains the national influence it once had. We say that the black political struggle is synonymous with social change in America as a whole. For example, King's "poor people's campaign" was humanistic in that it addressed the concerns of all people - not just Blacks.

<sup>4</sup>See for example, James H. Cone, The Black Theology of Liberation (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), or Albert B. Cleage, The Black Messiah (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

early 70's has been the Black Church. As an organizational form it has clearly demonstrated its stability. The question is, can there be an effective fusion of religion and politics? If the church cleanses itself of other worldly orientations, the answer is yes. A fusion of religion and politics, in the late 70's and beyond, will represent the growth of a new church. The old church of the sixties will, hopefully, give birth to the new. C. Eric Lincoln feels that a new church is not only a possibility but that the transformation has already taken place.<sup>5</sup>

The Negro Church which died lives on  
in the Black Church born of its loins,  
flesh of its flesh, for there are no dis-  
junctions in religion.

Black activists, like Bobby Seale, have returned to the church; not so much as believers in its religious values but as believers in the value of an organizational form that is black in its content.<sup>6</sup> Activists have come to realize that black lawyers, politicians, and grass-roots organizers are playing a part in social change but are limited in their effectiveness. Their impact is lessened since they have not developed indigenous black organizational structures which are capable of reaching and mobilizing the masses. The

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<sup>5</sup>Eric C. Lincoln, The Negro Church Since Frazier (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Seale, during an informal discussion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (Spring 74), gave this as the reason for the formation of his church.

Black Church is such an organizational form - it only has to be utilized. To get at the fusion of religion and politics we would like to digress for a moment and return to our research findings. In doing so, we will examine an instance in which the fusion is being sought.

"Don't Forget the Bridge that Brought You Over"

As you recall, St. Paul is comprised of three readily identifiable sub-groups: shouters, band members and action-seekers. We would like to add to these three a newly emerging group, the youth of the church. They were not introduced as a sub-group because their ultimate goals have not yet been formulated. There are some who fit into the categories of action-seekers or shouters but the majority attend church upon parental demands. The youths are important in our discussion of a fusion of religion and politics for they have not been infected with a religious dependency. We also noted, in Chapter III, that action-seekers were closer than any other sub-group, to street people. Furthermore, data indicates that it is possible to bring street people into the church if the appropriate cultural elements are available (i.e., oratory, music). Shouters and band members have already made a religious commitment but religion is not enough for the youth nor for action-seekers. We are suggesting that, for the latter two sub-groups, a political

interpretation of "this troubled world" would be more conducive.

In fusing religion with politics, we are not calling for the destruction of the church as it now exist. The fusion would allow band members and shouters to attain their desired ends, and in doing so, would meet the needs of both the youth and action-seekers. Band members, we feel, would accept the addition of a sub-group whose goals are political. Why? Their religion is a combination of the gospel and protest.expression. The researcher found the combined themes of gospel and protest in sermons, prayers, and testimonies. It is, however, best illustrated in a conversation held with Deacon Galvin. He, while being what he calls a "true baptist," spoke of protest when asked, "What has the church done for us (black people)?"

The church has been like a mother to the Negro. She has raised us out of slavery, taken me and probably your folks too - off the delta plantations, and built a decent place to live in. The church is the Negro's connection to the Lord; without it, I am afraid we'd all be lost. The church is God and God is the church.

If you every watched a mother when danger is around, you have to appreciate the church. A mother, I don't care how much her children disobeys her, she always sees after them. You young folks don't know it but the church is the same way. When its children are treated wrong . . . it tries to protect them. She'll scream loud enough for the world to hear. We baptist believe in prayer but when somebody is doin' us wrong . . . we tell em about it. When we

get the whole church together things get listened to. The church has respect; it ain't just - how do they say it - "a bunch of crazy niggas talkin'."

The concession of including another sub-group in the church would enhance the church's growth and not impede its religious functioning. The fusion cannot take place without proper leadership though. The minister is an important person in the directional movement of the church; the changes he institutes may be met with hostility but received nevertheless. The clergy must show versatility if a new sub-group is to come to the surface. For he will then have to facilitate the ends-means of still another group. This should not be difficult since sermons have political references scattered throughout them anyway.

The following discussion of sermon material illustrates how political aspects of a "message" can be fused with a religious interpretation of black history. The sermon was delivered by a visiting evangelist, Rev. Dickey Wilson of Dangerfield, Texas, and the occasion is a "youth revival." The message is entitled, "Maintaining a Sense of History, in a World Dominated by Aryans." The Rev. Wilson's address is more a historical analysis than an activist approach but this is of little consequence. For a prerequisite for developing a political group is a correct historical interpretation.

Rev. Wilson opens his sermon by paying respect to the sacred values of the devoutly religious but then proceeds to make them aware of his values.

I want y'all to let me do it my way tonight!  
 I been preachin your way all week. Tonight  
 I want to do my own thing. But first I want  
 to hear a song from this young man over here.

A professional musician performs a song which is, although having religious lyrics, closer in proximity to a rhythm and blues tune than to traditional spirituals. The musician skillfully combined sacred verses with a secular style of performing. He caressed the microphone, entered into a semi-dance, and screamed with a quality that rivaled the best secular performances. All of this was to the delight of the youthful portion of the audience. The performance temporarily brought a bit of pure entertainment into the worship service as the performer's style overshadowed the religious nature of his material. Older members of the audience outwardly renounced the performance to one another with statements like - "child that racket gives me a headache" - but during the performance they swayed, rocked and rhythmically clapped their hands and shuffled their feet. "That racket" was justifiable in their minds, however, because it was a way of conveying "the lord's praises" to the "young folks." With the congregation now loosened up, the pastor was ready to launch into the message. But



first he leads the congregation in prayer.

We come God, giving thanks for all the pleasures bestowed upon us. As we come this evening, we pray you will bless everyone assembled here. We know you can lead better than we can. All those going down the road of destruction turn them around. Oh Lord, please have mercy on us! Oh, Lord please have mercy on us.

To this point, the minister hasn't deviated significantly from the regular preaching format. The inclusion of the prayer means that he has included something into the service for shouters, band members, action-seekers, and the youth as well. Whether purposely done or not, he has catered to all groups in the setting. All are, therefore, attentive as he begins his discourse on "a sense of history."

I ain't forgot . . . that my folks had to go to the back door. Some of you children don't remember that. But I ain't forgot. I ain't forgot that the man promised my folks half the cotton crop but didn't give it too 'em. Children . . . that ain't your fight, ours is a different fight.

Older persons in the setting are drawn to the message because they have carried the burden of struggle for years. They are not removed from the current political movement; the movement is merely a continuation of what they have expressed through religion as their "trials and tribulations."

Oppression is a central theme in the lives of young and old alike. The only difference is that its forms have changed as a result of historical processes. The visiting

evangelists' opening statement points out the dynamics of history, from "separate but equal" to contemporary conditions. The thrust of his message is that an understanding of history is an indispensable ingredient in the forming of an ideology which will logically deal with oppression in its present form.

The title of tonight's message is . . . "Maintaining a Sense of History in a World Dominated by Aryans." If you can't remember the long title, maybe you'll remember a shorter version . . . "Don't forget the Bridge that Brought you Over."

Many of us have lost our sense of history. I don't think that the black man who stands on the streets and shouts, "black power," is thinking. I don't think a man who throws fire bombs in his own neighborhood is thinking. I don't think . . . that's black power. When I go to a city like Detroit and see tall buildings that are owned by black men, stores that black people own . . . that's black power.

"Black power" is defined by the evangelist as the constructive development of the black community. By denouncing violence in favor of "thinking," no one in the audience is able to disagree with his politics. A non-violent approach is consistent with the theological basis of the church.

The following statements, which are an elaboration of the situation in Detroit, are the most important portion

of the message.

Those people haven't lost their sense of history. They remember that their parents and the generations before them said . . . Be Somebody! Drinkin' "20-20" (wine) on street corners ain't black power. Jackin' your cars up in the air so they look . . . "mean," ain't black power. If the church and all the radicals, revolutionaries, junkies, prostitutes, and businessmen can come together . . . black people will be somebody.

The evangelist has undertaken a criticism of the most radical elements in the black community. Toward the end of the paragraph, he changes directions by mentioning a coalition between the various elements in the community. He has hinted at the decline of the Black Church as the "only" representative of the community. In a round about way, he suggested that: the church must bridge the gap existing between it and the black community as a whole, between street people, radicals, revolutionaries, and businessmen. If blacks as "a people" are to take progressive steps, the many parts that constitute the whole must "come together." Part of the Reverend's thinking seems to be that the church, as a cultural institution, can be an integrating force. The evangelist, after having lectured the congregation on the politics of black existence, then fuses his address with a religious interpretation.

I don't understand how a group of people in bondage can be so patient. Yet when

they're out of bondage they can become so impatient. God brought you out of bondage and now you're impatient and won't wait on him. I am afraid of a person who can't remember the bridge that brought him over. If he don't know where he came from, he don't know where he's going.

Our record of observations leaves us with scanty data on how band members, action seekers, and shouters received the content of Rev. Wilson's sermon. We do know that the regular church-goers in attendance responded favorably in terms of economic contributions. Deacon Haddix, in tying together the sermon and a show of economic appreciation, told the congregation:

It's been awhile since I heard a message like we heard tonight. Religion ain't dead! The Lord ain't antique! We have to teach our children that God is on the side of the sufferin'; he's a plain-folk's God.

Responses from the youth of the church ranged from unexplained comments like, "I liked what he was rappin'," to more sophisticated and in-depth answers. The latter type is represented by after-service comments elicited from Odessa and Ruth Ann.

Odessa: Tonight was the best service I been to in a long time!

Ruth Ann: Same here. He rapped about now.

Odessa: I don't miss church too much cause I like to sing in the choir. I really dig it. Rev. Green says something every now and then-- but . . .

Ruth Ann: Yea, but mostly about the bible;  
most kids don't even believe in it.

Odessa: But Rev. Wilson talked about somethin'  
heavy. We don't know if the stuff  
about God and the bible is true, but  
the shape niggas is in is for real;  
it's for real everyday, not just on  
Sundays.

Analysis of an Event:

Crystallization of Unity--  
the Street and the Church

The isolation between street and church breaks down under stress. Here, stress is taken to mean instances of racial oppression. The church and street people unite in their attitudes under conditions of community crises, especially racial incidents. Two shooting incidents were used to demonstrate this. The incidents reveal conditions under which the church becomes more unified with the black community in relation to the metro environment (City Hall).<sup>7</sup>

The summer of 1974 was marred by two separate incidents of significance to both St. Paul Baptist Church and the black community. The seriousness of the incidents, for both parties, made it possible to examine the views of two extreme types of community actors on events that touched upon their lives.

In spite of the way they categorize themselves

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<sup>7</sup>The reader is advised to take note of the minister's way of handling the shooting incidents. The researcher believes he does so in a manner which resembles that used in the utility problem.

(children of God and street people), data shows that actors from both ends of the spectrum come together in certain situations and divorce themselves from their respective frame of reference. Racial incidents, as interpreted in the minds of the black community and not in the minds of outsiders, bring out latent attitudes in regard to the American social structure in general and the forces which are its visible guardian (i.e., the police and City Hall in this instance).

Instead of identifying themselves and one another, as street people and religious persons, a new identity emerges as the intensity of racial situations rise. The new identity is that of, not a church person or a street person, but a black person faced with the problems of coping with a hostile environment. The conventional categories, although losing their importance, do not disappear completely, for as the incident slowly dies down, they slowly come to the surface again. But even as they re-emerge, the occupants of each category are cognizant that they share a common plight, that they are confronting the same antagonist, and that despite their fantasies of being hustlers or children of God the guardians of the social structure lump them all into a single category. With the impending threat of rebellion they all become "niggers." Fantasizing has long been, and still is, a means of dealing with the overt pressures of being black

in a society tailored for whites. With the emergence of racial incidents, community actors become suddenly aware that the consequences of fantasizing are real - very real indeed.

(1) Description of the Events

By presenting an analytical description of the incidents, first from within the church and then from the street corner perspective, it is hoped that the reader will concentrate on the emergence of parallel attitudes. The attitudes are expressed with different degrees of intensity and in different ways. These differences are understandable when one takes into account the social systems in which feelings and attitudes are expressed.

The social systems of the church and the street corner call for and nurture distinct forms of expression. Nevertheless, we believe the overall attitudes are one and the same. Common attitudes, toward agents and agencies found outside of the community, came about because the seriousness of the incidents created conditions under which the church was not so separated from one of its environmental sectors, the black community.

The hot sticky night of June the 6th was suddenly, without warning, disturbed by an exchange of gun fire between a black male adult they identified as, a "Sniper."<sup>8</sup> In the

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<sup>8</sup>Portions of the stories were taken from the mass

beginning, the incident had nothing to do with a confrontation between the police and the person who was to eventually contest them. Serving as a catalyst in the confrontation was a family dispute that resulted in the shooting of a black man by the sniper. The victim was later identified as a step-brother to the accused. The first two police officers arriving on the scene were downed as they were greeted with several shotgun blasts. Before the hot, sticky night turned into a rain-soaked morning, a sizeable crowd of spectators had gathered to watch a drama that ended in the death of one police officer, the wounding of nine other officers, the wounding by police of a black lady - there in the capacity of a spectator, and the shooting death of the sniper as he was forced to emerge from a house that was ablaze as a result of "tear gas canisters."

The crowds witnessing the more than six-hour drama had a peculiar interpretation of the proceedings. To many of the neighborhood residents, and others drawn to the scene by community rumors or television and radio coverage, the incident was not a matter of "law and order" but of "a brother holdin' off the pigs." The hero-status attributed to such a "brother" pushed into the background the fact that

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(Cont.) media. The Omaha World Herald from June 6th until the issue died, was the major source of police-related information. Also the Omaha Star, a local paper was used.



a criminal act had been committed against a black man by the sniper.

The subsequent shooting of each officer was accompanied by a round of cheering from a portion of the crowd. We suspect that, the cheering was not directed toward individual personalities but toward policemen as authority figures. The cheering was perhaps the expression of conventional attitudes toward the policemen/guardians and the triumph of the sniper over the faceless, nameless men in blue was seen as repayment for past atrocities. This view is summed up by a crowd of teenagers, who in spreading the news to myself and others, dubbed the incident as "the big payoff."<sup>9</sup> The vulnerability of the police gave those in the street a sense of power and control that seemed to breed optimism in contrast to the pessimism found under the normal, everyday conditions of continual surveillance, suppression, and antagonism by the police.

Just think . . . if all the niggas in North  
Omaha would get themselves together and  
start poppin' caps (shooting) on the pigs.  
Just think, man, just think!

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<sup>9</sup>The phraseology, "the big pay back," is taken from the then popular music of Rhythm and Blues artist James Brown. In his music he speaks of a personal vindicate. To a person who has captured the imagination of his lady friend he "wants revenge, the big pay back."

The streets are the domain of the individual; where people at times live off of one another. We-ness is not always verbalized. From past experiences, it is safe to say that it comes about more frequently in crisis situations.

(2) The Response of the Black Community

Following the end of the physical violence, hostility between the police and the black community remained. Questions were posed, regarding the police's handling of the situation, by ministers, state senators and agency representatives. These persons, who claimed to have been representing the "concerns" of the community, directed the following questions at city officials.

1. Why did the fatally shot officer endanger his life needlessly? Was he ordered to do so?
2. If the "sniper" had been white, would he have been pressed into shooting the officers or would they have simply waited and negotiated with the sniper?
3. Exactly how did the house in which the "sniper" was barricaded catch fire? Was it from the tear gas cannister or from other sources?
4. Did the officers stir up the crowd by dragging the victims lifeless-body down a small flight of steps as if it were the carcass of a dead animal?
5. A lady was physically apprehended, and subsequently shot. Was it necessary?

6. Why wasn't there a report filed by the officer who, after apprehending the lady, was responsible for her wounds? Should he be fired?
7. Why did city officials allow persons other than police officers to fire upon the house?
8. The city has an auxiliary which serves as a supplemental law enforcement agency. Does it resemble a vigilante committee? Given the racial climate in the city and America as a whole, is this dangerous?
9. Are the police and their administrators competent?
10. Is the police force an equal opportunity employer?
11. Should there be a "Grand Jury Investigation?"

These and numerous other questions kept the shooting incident in an important light in the black community. To complicate matters, two days later, another black man was slain in a separate incident involving "an exchange of gunfire with police."

A patrolman, after having words with a black man at a stoplight, followed him to his home. It is here that a confusing round of events lead to a further exchange of words, the exchange of gunfire, and conflicting stories between the officer and the wife of the deceased.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The officer argued that the suspect fired a shot that barely missed his head. The suspect's wife contended that the officer fired through the front door and there was no exchange of gunfire.

The second shooting was, in the view of law enforcement agents, separate from the first. Contrary to this opinion, many in the black community saw the two separate events as one continuous happening. At any rate, they are linked together since both have to do with the issues in question: the content of latent attitudes towards the role of the police in the black community. Are the police civil servants who uphold the rights of community actors or are they a civilian army maintaining marshall law?

(3) Humanistic Concerns of the Researcher

Both shooting incidents became a part of the research enterprise in that they affected the congregation of St. Paul in a very direct way. The step-brother of the sniper, who was the first target because of a dispute over personal debts, was and is a member of St. Paul. Joining him in membership is his mother and the remainder of his family. Though the sniper was himself not a member of any church, his family's affiliations dictated that his funeral and the "feeding of the family" be conducted by the officials of St. Paul. Due to another set of haphazard circumstances, the victim of the second shooting incident was also a member of St. Paul. He served on the Board of Trustees and as a member of the gospel choir.

Together these two men touched upon the lives of both the congregation of St. Paul and the black community.

Their deaths are important for two reasons. Human life, first of all, is a terrible thing to waste. Secondly, the two deaths reactivated, and brought out into the open, conflicts over the role of policemen. The men are dead and will probably be remembered by close friends and relatives only. On the other hand, the issue of the police will never die. The latent attitudes may become dormant, but they will never fade from existence. They will rise to the surface each time an individual is confronted by the police or in situations that foster the collective identification of the police as eight-hour-a-day soldiers who come into the black community to hunt, enforce laws which they and the black citizenry are alienated from, and then quietly withdraw to the suburbs as the work shift changes.<sup>11</sup>

Police work, since it deals with real life human beings as subjects, must be more than a job. With human beings as subjects, police work demands human relations skills. Such skills, in the case of the black community, are tremendously important since policemen and their attitudes are an extension of the culture in which they are reared. Dressing them in blue uniforms, assigning them a rank,

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<sup>11</sup>The researcher feels that the act of giving promotions of the basis of the number of arrest made is no more than a legalization of man-hunting. Some laws are contrary to the ways of the community and citizens don't consider some acts illegal (craps).

delegating special authority to them while placing a host of new and sophisticated weaponry in their hands, as the recruitment of a few well-paid but highly inactive black policemen, does not divorce individual members of the department from a cultural background which has included well over two hundred years of racism.

On the other side of the coin, the black community must make some adjustments for they are the only ones who can yet instill a bit of feeling and rationality into the administrative overseers of the new plantation system.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, as victims of the present system, and the past system which gave way to its contemporary offspring, the black community has some impurities that must be dealt with.

(4) The Funeral of the "Sniper" (Tuesday, June 11th)

Data pertaining to the shootings were collected by virtue of attending activities which brought the members of St. Paul together as a unified body. Included in the series of activities were Sunday morning worship services, Wednesday night prayer meetings, two funerals and two "feeding of the families." Information was drawn from isolated discussions

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<sup>12</sup>The ghetto is seen as a sophisticated version of a plantation system. Plantations operated on the basis of free labor. The share cropping system replaced it as a means of coordinating surplus land and labor. With industrialization replacing the agricultural economy, ghettos have served as a vast reservoir of cheap labor and as a market outlet.

with church members. The most important data, in our estimation, were derived from the minister's responses. Even though individual churchmen no doubt reacted in ways consistent with their personalities, the minister is a significant force in that there are many who will follow a stance taken by him. His stance is, on some occasions, enough to bring varied attitudes together into a collective consciousness.

The funeral of the sniper was held on a weekday - a day of work for many in the black community. Working people caught up in their forty-hour routine were unable to attend the funeral, but several that I came across expressed some interest in the affair. Like their work-a-day counterparts, a number of street-people were also caught up in their normal round of activities. They, too, had to make ends meet, even in light of community feelings about the shooting incidents. A street-corner man, with whom I received a ride to the site of the funeral with, expressed the following thoughts. They combine a concern for the shooting with the act of making a living.

That was cold man. That was cold the way they did. I was there and I wasn't goin' to leave until he wiped them out . . . or they wiped him out.

I got to make this stop before I drop you at the funeral home. I'd like to go to the funeral but I gotta take care of business

first. I gotta deliver this medicine (heroin) to my people this mornin'. Gotta keep em healthy. (A car pulled up and he then sold three tin-foil packages of "smak" to a "regular" customer, I was then dropped off at the funeral home.)

Having briefly observed the street corner world as I passed through the community, I was now ready to enter into the chapel where the funeral was to be held. The attendance was very small and the ceremony a brief one as only close friends of the deceased, members of his family, and a few church members were present. Sympathy was extended to the family by all those in attendance. But, since the deceased was not a member of the church and had also committed a crime, there was little eulogizing. The minister and the congregation interpreted the past days violence from a religious perspective. A recurring theme in the interpretation gave mention to the uncertainties of life.

It's good to be alive . . . that just goes to show you that nobody knows when their time is up. Only God knows. He knows because he rules and superrules.

In reflecting upon the uncertainties of life, the minister and the small group of mourners (especially the deacons, ushers, and church mothers) were reaffirming their rationale for believing in the deity. The killings were proof that God intervened in the affairs of man and that a religious existence is the only way to acquire protection from the frightening events occurring in the world around



them. God will protect his children, but in the event that his protection falters, it is no reason for alarm for he has a plan for all.

When things like this happen it's the will of God. All we can do is trust in him . . . he knows what's best.

This reaction of the church, at this point, is expected. The fact that, the deceased had committed the ultimate of all sins and was "out of the church," shaped the behavior of those in attendance. In order to be consistent about their religion, they could not be openly political in the expression of their grief. The death of the policeman and the sniper were not seen in a racial light. It was not the actual shooting that was emphasized but the conditions underlying a world of trouble. Within the context of the funeral, the incident had a biblical tone. It was the actualization of what the bible had prophesized.

The bible said it will be father against son and brother against brother. It's here now! This is the beginning of the end. We must trust in the Lord and everything will be alright. God is an intelligent God . . . an understandin' God.

Hence, the shootings should not be surprising since it and other similar affairs were foretold in the bible. A biblical interpretation of the event raised another issue in the minds of the church. Sister McDougal, who speaks below, was not the only church person who related the

shootings to biblical notions of the self-destruction of the world.

I believe we are livin' in troubled times.  
I believe the end of the world is close at hand. I been through a lot of this week. I don't see why we don't believe in the word of the Lord since we can see it happening in front of us. God said there would be a time when men kill each other . . . that time is now. Things is gettin' worse and worse everyday. The world can't hold out much longer.

The magnitude of the event, which left in its wake two dead and ten wounded, was perhaps responsible for the church's reaction. The incident was seen from a religious perspective and was significant because it was a sign of the times.

(5) The Funeral of Henry Holmes (Saturday, June 15th)

The funeral services for Henry Holmes were a sharp contrast to those held for the sniper. Several factors were responsible for the apparent differences, among them were Holmes' church membership, the fact that he had committed no criminal offense, and the scheduling of services on a Saturday.

Attention should be directed toward the minister in order to gain an understanding of the funeral and the ensuing events. In the chapter on the metro-environment, the utility issue showed how the pastor was able to transform a problem into a crisis situation. His skills are even more evident in the shooting incident. Unlike the sniper's funeral, the

death of Holmes, and the circumstances under which it occurred, gave him something to work with. We will now follow his logic as he moves through the final funeral and into a post-funeral interpretation of both shootings.

The services for Holmes, when compared to those of the slain sniper, were much grander affairs. There were a large number of persons present; these included close friends, relatives from the city and from other states, a substantial number of church members who had worked with the deceased on church-related projects, and many community members who had heard about the circumstances surrounding Holmes' death. The rites, which were held in a jam-packed church rather than a funeral home, were the epitome of what St. Paul attempts to offer its members. That is, friendship in the time of need; a eulogy for the deceased, flowers, a church funeral, the reading of condolences from friends, and a feeding of the family. Membership in the church on the part of the deceased was, in addition to the presents of a large number of community actors, responsible for the quality of the services. The minister wasted little time as he quickly sized the importance of the event and performed accordingly.

The message was interspersed with elements of business, a religious interpretation of the death of the deceased, and indirect references to conflicts in police reports.

Since the service was held in the church, the minister was freed to get the message across in his most effective manner, and to reaffirm the religious tenants of the bereaved at the same time. The religious content of the sermon is first noticed as the minister announces that: "the subject of today's text is . . . "Gettin' Ready."

I would like to address you briefly this mornin' about gettin' ready. There are a number of things you might do to get ready. Henry Holmes got ready through baptism and being born again. To get ready you have to get right with God. God knows the nature of man's heart. There are some things in our lives we have to straighten out. I ain't got all mine straightened out but I am workin' on it. I got to get ready to meet God.

The sermon, up to now, has employed Holmes as a reference point. The deceased is implicitly related to the benefits which the church has to offer prospective clients. The shooting episode is employed to demonstrate the value of "gettin ready," and its relationship to church participation. The deceased has, through membership on the Trustee Board and by being President of the Angel Gospel Singers, attained his rightful resting place.

After the above inferences, the sermon changes directions and the minister continues by saying:

Henry was a man who had no criminal record. He had no criminal record! He had no criminal record! You could talk to him! (he then pauses and addresses the audience directly) You didn't hear what I said.

I said . . . He didn't have no criminal record and you could talk to him! And you can print that in the paper if you want to! There are some folks here not to bereave this man, but to hear what Green's gonna say about him.

Those in attendance responded to this portion of the message with a great deal of collective expression. A resounding number of "Amens," "tell it," and "go ahead Green" were heard. The collective expression was in response to his (minister's) remarks. They were not automatic as the phrases were clearly distinguishable from the verbal participation of ushers and deacons who are familiar with the minister's style.

Direct references to the lack of a criminal record and the approachability of the deceased, was the first sign of a social interpretation of the shooting. References to the qualities of approachability and law abiding are significant because they challenge police reports. Police press releases stated that, the patrolman repeatedly tried to talk to Holmes but "he wouldn't listen."

With the subtle but effective questioning of what actually took place between Holmes and the police, the minister was again ready to move on.

It takes a number of years to get ready. You got to work on it slowly. Gettin' ready includes a lot of things. I know some of yall gon get mad at me for sayin' this, but when your gettin' ready it includes the spiritual and the financial.

When Henry was gettin' ready, he got the insurance policy ready. Cause when you get ready you take care of everything.

The sudden intrusion of business matters into the funeral services did take a few mourners by surprise but is not all that unusual. For ushers typically, during worship services, hand out leaflets from an insurance company located in the black community. The minister further advertises the need for insurance by continuously telling his congregation that, "it's a shame to die without insurance and embarrass your family." In one quick statement the minister had succeeded in developing a religious view of the event, implying a public disclaimer of police reports, and advertising the need for insurance - part of which he and the church receive for services rendered. The next scheduled worship event would be one in which he would turn his attentions inward and address the members of St. Paul on the social meanings of the two shootings.

(6) Worship Service (June 16th) - Building a Protest Threat

Following the Holmes' funeral, the positions of the minister and the congregation underwent a slight shift. The congregation now looked upon the shootings from a social perspective. The Sunday following the Holmes' funeral marked the first time that members of the congregation publically introduce forces other than God into the issue. The

surfacing of a social perspective did not mean the death of the religious outlook. The latter never seemed to die away but lingered on and in many cases merged with social explanations.

We goin' through dark times. We got to have faith in God. We can't have faith in the police and civil courts in our country. They have sunk to a level where it don't do no good to call em.

The congregation and the minister shifted their positions at approximately the same time. It is not known, however, whether the minister influenced the new verbal responses of the congregation or whether the congregational mood forced a change in the pastor's stance. Regardless of the circumstances, the minister was on top of the situation. In combining religion with the increasingly important social perspective, he realized that the church needed to come together in order to be an effective force.

God told me to ask all members . . . all members, to attend prayer meetin' Wednesday night. We are sittin' on a powder keg and the only way we goin' to come thru it is to get the church together.

Very quickly, a foundation for the social perspective was laid and legitimized by the expression, "God told me." Unification is central if the church is to be a meaningful force in communicating its newly verbalized perspective to persons occupying the seats of authority in metropolitan Omaha. The minister intends to develop a power basis, from

which feelings can be articulated, by bringing the church together into a viable means of protest. This is to be done through the medium of prayer. Since the church hasn't the power to mobilize the entire community, it must get its own house in order.

The mayor has relieved two officers and I would like members of the church to write him a letter of congratulations. It may seem like it won't help . . . but it does help. This thing is gonna be investigated. I think the people of this church ought to try. Don't fool yourself!

The minister, in order to sell his plan of action to the congregation, must do more than command their obedience. He must carefully, and quite logically, explain what the situation means to them. As far as the shootings are concerned, he reminded his congregation that they could not divorce themselves from the rest of the black community. They were told, in so many words, that if they let the current situation pass without protest, the seeds will be sown for similar acts of violence.

I sometimes tell this story, I know some of you done heard it before but I am gonna tell it again anyway.

A bear was eating a man up and another man was laughin'. The man being eatin' looked at him and said . . . If you ain't gonn help me don't laugh because when he finishes with me, he's gonna eat you (loud responses from the audience). The Lord told me to tell the members of this church to come here to prayer meetin' Wednesday night.



With the same swiftness with which he had begun the public disclosure of his social interpretation of the two shootings, the minister abruptly closed off discussion by restating the message passed on to him "by God." The worship service proceeded as usual but the seeds of protest had been skillfully planted. Wednesday night prayer meeting would largely determine whether or not he could make the planted seeds grow.

(7) Wednesday Night 'Prayer Meeting' (June 19th)

Wednesday night prayer meetings have, in recent years, experienced a sharp decline in attendance. Church officials are perpetually trying to increase interest in the event. Using prayer meeting to rally the church behind a protest threat would at the same time serve as a strategic point in correcting sporadic attendance at the event. Whatever the reason, the church didn't exactly rally around the cause. Even so, the minister had attracted a slightly larger crowd than usual and immediately began to play upon their religiosity. He began where he had left off the previous Sunday; using religion as a solidifying agent in the mobilization of the church.

God told me to call you here this evening. There is death on every hand. We got to go back to prayer. We can't make it without prayer. All those that say they believes in prayer, don't believe in prayer. If they did, more of em would be in prayer meetin'.

Its' the only way we can get out there  
and fight this mean old world. Let us  
pray.

Praying is seen as a way of overcoming all present difficulties. Individual worshipers, by praying, are able to ask God to intervene in the affairs of man. The person praying will, as a consequence of his act, receive enough personal strength to see him (her) through trying times. The sermon was used to communicate a social interpretation of the shootings to those present at the Holmes funeral. Using another of his verbal tools, the minister this time voiced his social concern through a prayer.

Oh Lord, our city is standin' in danger.  
Our children is in danger. We're goin'  
through trials and tribulations. I realize  
we can't fight the problem by ourselves.  
Oh Lord . . . remember the police this  
evenin'. Remember our mean city this  
evenin'. The reason I am callin' this  
evenin', there's death on every hand. If  
you come by this evenin' I know things will  
be all right. Now Lord!! Now Lord!! Now  
Lord!!! Ohhhhhhhh, Now Lord!!! Now Lord,  
when the warfare is over down here, we  
got to, go staggerin' in the dyin' room.  
Meet me! Meet me!! Meet me, in the dyin'  
hour.

The prayer provides insightful data on the minister's handling of the incident and his relation to his congregation. Chapters II, III, and IV pointed out the existence of three types of sub-groups within the church. They also described the pastor's efforts at catering to each sub-group in order to facilitate their means-ends. In building a

protest threat within his church, he cannot foresake any of these types of church persons. Thus, the prayer delivered at prayer meeting was geared to appeal to a diversified group.

The idea of prayer being the key to fighting "this mean old world" is in line with the means of the small band of believers. The repetitive emphasis on phrases like "meet me" and "now Lord" had, in our estimation, something to do with the physical reactions engaged in by shouters. As for the action-seekers, the statement, "God told me to tell you," indicates that something special was to take place at prayer meeting.

Wednesday-night prayer meeting did not provide a large enough audience for the protest to take place. Because the youth of the church were responsive to politically oriented messages, the researcher wondered why the minister chose prayer meeting rather than building his protest threat around youth groups. The seeds were planted but did not grow. If the seeds were to sprout, and not lie dormant, the minister knew a little added inducement would be needed at the next worship event.

(8) Sunday Worship Service (June 23)

One week following the last funeral, the minister had not succeeded in building a collective protest. The special prayer meeting had done little good in solidifying all

the members of his church. Unknown to myself and others in the setting, the worship service of June 23rd would be the final public attempt at mobilizing St. Paul around the deaths of the past weeks. A last ditch stance usually requires a special effort on the part of individuals most dedicated to a given cause. The minister's last stance was no different. He addressed the congregation in a very hard and fast manner.

Our city is in trouble. Some of these niggas out here got machine guns and sub-machine guns and thangs. So you know what the white man must have his hands on (very loud response from the audience). The white folks is gettin' ready and the niggas is gettin' ready. If ever we need prayer . . . we need it now. Omaha's a wicked city (in regards to the last sentence he calls for a response from the audience by saying Huh! . . . and they enthusiastically respond).

The affairs of the last few days have now been defined as the nucleus for an upcoming race war. No longer is it viewed as an incident between police and the black community. The new definition has introduced the thought of, whites against blacks. The white-black confrontation, as the minister interprets it, will not be a haphazard but a well planned and executed one. It is not known whether the minister had actual knowledge concerning the "illegal" possession of automatic weapons or whether he is expressing

something he believes to be true.<sup>13</sup> Either way, the possibility that civilians had control of sophisticated weaponry was enough to awaken the congregation.

The minister, after having introduced the thought of a race war, again implanted in the minds of the congregation the exact way to meet the upcoming dangers.

The only way we can make it through this killin' is through Jesus. The only way we can make it through the comin' war is through the church. The hand of the devil is reachin' out everywhere.

As we said earlier, the worship service of June 23rd was the most intensive try at transforming dissatisfaction over the shootings into a protest threat. The Reverend was, in order to achieve this, using a variety of techniques but still remaining within religious boundaries. On this particular Sunday, he footnoted what he was saying through the use of the ministerial tool of "grilling." He quickly turned in the direction of Jesse McDonald (the first person shot by the sniper as he and his half-brother (sniper) argued over a personal debt) and said:

You know God is wonderful! God is wonderful! To show you who he is and what he can do . . . Brother Jesse, can you stand?

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<sup>13</sup>The researcher was curious about this disclosure himself. Ministers are part of the black community in many ways. They, therefore have communication channels that are open to them. My puzzlement was due to the fact that I had picked up similar information while collecting data on the "streets."

"Brother Jesse" received an extended ovation from the audience as he slowly walked to the front of the church with his sagging body showing signs of the previous weeks shotgun blasts. He then offers up a brief testimony.

I can stand here for an hour and I can't thank God enough. I am livin' proof of God's goodness, if I had 10,000 chances . . . I couldn't thank him enough.

The congregation's response to "brother" Jesse's testimony was loud and long. But the minister, staring around the room, half content but apparently not fully satisfied, put Brother Jesse's mother in the spotlight. While asking her to stand he, in the same breath, made the following comment.

She suffered a lot of pain through this whole thing. You listen to this now (speaking to the audience), cause y'all got children too! It could happen to you tomorrow or the next day! God is askin' us to come back. The only way you can come back is on your knees.

Calling witnesses to the front introduced the personal element into the situation and was the final bit of strategy used in efforts to mobilize a protest threat. With the ending of worship service, the issue ceased to be discussed from the pulpit in a direct manner. The dying away of the issue means that the minister had either failed or he had succeeded. To find out which, we need to review the past events by informing the reader on religious actions that

took place on the outside of St. Paul.

(9) Enter the "Ministerial Alliance"

Throughout the present work we have mentioned the talents of St. Paul's ministry. The pastor is cast as a religious man, an entertainer, and above all else a leader. As a leader he is responsible for guiding his congregation through "troubled times."

We believe that the stance taken on a given issue is determined more by the clergy than by its members. But to take a stance he must mobilize his church first. While doing so, he is compelled to remain in the religious domain (i.e., continual references to the power of God, delivering protest messages through the sermon and through prayers, and employing personal testimony if the situation allows).

St. Paul's minister represents only one church; therefore, mobilization of such small members means very little. However, he is a member of a "Ministerial Alliance." The alliance is comprised of ministers (regardless of denominations) who are "in good and regular standing with his denomination church."<sup>14</sup> The alliance is an opportunity for ministers to engage in fellowship with one another. Also, as the bylaws state, it has political ends as well.

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<sup>14</sup>Taken from the bylaws of the Ministerial Alliance (p. 2). My thanks goes to past president, Rev. James Whittington, for making a copy of the document available.

The purpose of the alliance is to create an opportunity to combine the strengths of the churches in a united approach with agencies to advance the civic welfare of the community when deemed necessary. The clergy in the community must be concerned with all facets of community life; social, political, economic, and religious.<sup>15</sup>

Before the alliance can be an effective political force, each minister must bring with him, to the organization, the support of his congregation. If we look back at the shooting incidents, we recall that, St. Paul's minister promised his congregation that the episodes would be "investigated." Investigation, he felt, would result from the clergy of the community exerting pressure on city officials. Members of St. Paul, to increase the pressure, were asked to submit written letters to the mayor of the city. To demonstrate the need for writing letters and to secure the backing of the congregation, the shooting incidents were described as a crisis. Having gotten his own house in order, he was then able to combine with the other churches of the Ministerial Alliance. The composite of churches exercised their strength by joining with an organization of black businessmen and the heads of community social agencies in calling for a grand jury investigation. Their insistence upon an investigation was strengthened in that they had,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



and we were able to demonstrate it to city officials, the support of a number of citizens of the community.

(10) The Street Reaction: Death of the "Our Men in Blue" Concept

Data on the shootings, from the perspective of the street people, was collected by virtue of unstructured interviews with street corner men, hustlers, drug pushers, prostitutes, and occupants of the low-rent housing projects. To deal with the variable of age, data was gathered from street corners which are characteristically frequented by older street people, those frequented by persons who have not yet become institutionalized into street life, and playgrounds whose populations are composed of high school and college age individuals. Information was also collected from individuals who were not street people. The rank and file of the black community (i.e., working class people with families and other responsibilities) were loosely interviewed as they went to and from 24th Street to make use of services provided by pool halls, restaurants, bars, and other goods and service businesses.

Data were collected with the above approaches in mind, but were not analyzed in the same fashion. After collecting it, data were lumped into one category (the street people) and analyzed. The spontaneity of the situation and the length of time that the incident remained a hot issue did not

allow for a categorical breakdown of opinions. However, it is felt that the attitudes presented will provide the reader with a general overview of how street people react to the role of the police in the black community. Street people had no collective strategy in mind so the ensuing pages will not have the order that characterized the churches view of the incidents. Attitudes and opinions from the various sources were combined so as to present, to the reader, themes repeatedly heard during the duration of the incidents.

Street people were, by and large, more hostile in the expression of attitudes toward the role of the police. One reason for their overtness is the social system in which they expressed their opinions. The social system of the street corner, like the church, calls for and demands a certain form of behavior and expression. A second reason for the hostility in the personal expression of street people is that, unlike their religious counterparts they are in direct day-to-day combat with the police.

The combat stems from the police trying to control activities which are a livelihood and are of necessity for some to attain social mobility. To the police the activities are "crimes." They are, to street people, "a way to get over." The confrontation between police and street people is acknowledged in the following statement by the chief of police.

Police have good relations with Blacks in general, as evidenced by 150 cruiser runs a day at the request of the citizens in the Negro community. I would separate completely the community as a whole from a few hundred street people with whom there are problems (Omaha World Herald, Friday, July 5, 1974).

Street people themselves agree that there is hostility between police and persons on the street and the hostility was intensified as a result of the shooting of police officers. Regardless of who shot the officers, and for what reason, the street corners were seen as the area of retaliation.

Man the police ran everybody off the corner down at the Bali Hi. I am down there tryin' to get over. It's that graveyard shift. They be fuckin' with people late at night. Tryin' to get them nigga's off the corners. Callin' people "boy" and "nigger" . . . talkin' that bull shit. They tryin' to start some shit already! The mutha fuckas is ridin' fō (4) deep in they cars.

Oftentimes, there is the possibility that verbal assaults will be accompanied by physical attacks. Therefore, late night street corner gatherings are possible only if a sizable number of persons are present. In sum, there is safety in numbers but, by the same token, large numbers attract more attention from the authorities. The situation becomes a dangerous one since police officers are overly equipped, over-trained, and ill at ease. Much of the crowd jeering, the night of the shooting was directed at the

visible incompetency of the police.

Man . . . them mutha fuckas don't know what the fuck they're doin'. They was standin' around half scared. You could tell they was scared too! Niggas was shoutin' at em and they was gettin' nervous. A whole police department pistoled, shot gunned, and tear gased down to the bone, and the mutha fuckas was scared of a handful of niggas who ain't got nothin' but they mouths. Hey! they don't even need to be out here (referring to black community).

Street people are leary of the officers because of the combination of nervousness and the possession of weapons do not necessarily make sense. The police, we suspect, are able to sense the lack of authority their physical presence has and are forced to compensate by relying on their weaponry. A circular situation, in which street people feed off of the fear officers, is forged. In turn, the officers react to their aggressiveness by displaying more fear. To circumvent their fear they rely on their weapons which leads to aggression on their parts. Their aggressiveness is then a catalyst for the development of permanent attitudes toward the police.

We would hold that, the circular nature of attitude formation is not a new phenomena, nor is it confined to the City of Omaha. Further more, years and years of the circular process has nurtured a cultural perspective on the role of the police. The shootings merely served as the force which brought this perspective out into the open. The officers

killed or wounded, to many of those on the streets, were not men in blue but white men in blue. The shooting of the black man by the sniper was pushed into the background. More weight was given to the fact that "a nigga killed a white man" and in the eyes of his peers retaliation was in order.

Boy that nigga knew he was dead after he shot that first white man. The nigga he shot didn't matter. You know the cops was gonna kill him after he shot eight of em! That's more people than the S.L.A. shot up.

To truly understand the reasoning behind the assignment of higher values to the lives of whites, one would have to go back in history and examine the definition of crimes involving blacks against blacks and blacks against whites. The current feeling of "less time for killin' a nigga," seems to be upheld by the differential allocation of sentences by the judicial system. Without going into a discussion of judiciary processes, it is safe to say that many who expressed their opinions from the street saw the shootings as racial conflicts.

Amid the tension and restlessness of the hot summer evenings, were moments of humor. Humor was both an expression of hostility and an effort at breaking the endless hours of waiting to see what was going to happen. Much of the humor placed the police in a negative light. The following conversation is typical of the humor displayed during

the tense days coming after the shootings. One person draws the attention of a small group of black men and loudly asks a question. He asks the question but does not really expect an answer; for the question is one he wishes to answer himself.

I wonder what them Honkies minds be on when they ride through here (referring to a police car that just passed)?

The actor then answers the question via a mythical conversation. Through the conversation he attempts to imitate the accent of a white person by pronouncing each word in its completeness and with the right voice inflection.<sup>16</sup> This adds to his presentation as the audience derives more pleasure out of the imitation than they do the conversation itself.

George . . . Ah, I hope we make it through. Do you think we'll make it through this trip, Huh George? The niggers (note the pronunciation) are pretty thick out here tonight. Please let it be a peaceful night (he pauses and everyone laughs, then he calls a final commentary). Them mother fuckers (note pronunciation) is scared!

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<sup>16</sup>The researcher has observed this practice a number of times. It should be sufficient evidence to those who are unaware that Blacks are indeed bilingual. One could argue that they are trilingual. They use the black idiom, the language of the dominant culture, and a mixture of both.

Stories, like the preceding one, may seem insignificant to outsiders but they have played (and still do) a central role in crisis situations and in the day-to-day existence of black folks. One actor takes the lead and tries to entertain the remaining members of the group. The net effect is to keep the troubles at hand fresh in the minds of others but at the same moment, break the tenseness of the evening.

Apparently the inhabitants of greater metropolitan Omaha have a different conception of the police force. Their picture is a favorable one. What one might call the "our men in blue," concept. The concept holds that the police force is the guardian of justice and all else that is right. This view leaves little room for the individual idiosyncrasies of each patrolman to rise to the surface. For they are, supposedly, devoid of all prejudices in their roles of "servants of the people." In short, the image of the police is summed up by the newly proposed slogan to be placed on patrol cars "Our concern is with your safety."

Street people consider the metropolitan image misleading. Notice we said misleading and not false. The notion of "our men in blue" is seen as being true for the white community but not the black section of the city. Street people firmly believe that the police department acts differently in the white community, they believe the officers

play a dual role.

I know them mutha fuckas hate to pull duty out here. Out in the white folks neighborhood they can just lay back and help old ladies across the street, and shit like that. Out North, the mutha fuckas a push ole ladies down and drag em across the street (the speaker made the latter statement about North Omaha in a joking manner. But toward the end of his sentence his facial expression hardened and his tone of voice became very serious as he added.) Dog Mutha Fuckas!!

Despite the training and the efficiency with which the "tactical squads" react, street people are aware of their own power, but to a limited degree only. They know that the police force is well armed and have access to additional forces (i.e., sherrifs department, a force of special deputies, and the national guard if necessary), but they are the spoilers. They, as spoilers, have the ability to create enough pressure "downtown" to force the city into making concessions. The gaining of concessions from downtown is spoken of with a sense of pride. Pride is displayed because concessions amount to a form of blackmail and if the ransom isn't paid there's the threat of it becoming "a long hot summer."

Dam . . . these mutha fuckin' pigs is some-  
thin' else. They tryin' to start some shit  
already. They gonna start some shit since  
that nigga killed one of em. Man its gonna  
be a long hot summer. This is just the  
beginnin' of summer and the pigs are fuckin'  
up already. Just lookin' for an excuse  
to fuck over somebody!



The long hot summer, as we said, is a symbol of pride but is not something that one looks forward to with a feeling of enjoyment. When speaking of violent summers, street people know they'll be out front carrying the physical end of the burden. Therefore, preparing for such summers is a matter of getting one's self in the right mental attitude so that a state of readiness is reached "when the shit comes down." The state of readiness is brought about by pressures that have built up over time and, in addition, by the concessions to be gained.

They got to get up off of somethin' to cool these niggas down this summer. As Red Fox would say, "they gonna have to do some coordinatin'.

The knowledge of possible concessions is an indication that "the long hot summer" has been institutionalized both in the black community and downtown as well. Street people are subject to gain very little but they know that their actions will benefit the black community as a whole (i.e., new recreational facilities, the opening up of jobs, development of police-community relations boards, new federal money being pumped into the community for youth programs, etc.). Street people are also aware that they will pay a price but will be in no position to negotiate for the concessions.

As soon as the shit comes down, the white man gon look around for one of these ole

jive ass preachers or one of their colored white folks and make him a Nigga tammer.<sup>17</sup> They'll send him out North and he'll come out of one of these non-violent bags. I believe they kicks em a few crumbs under the table - that way, they'll keep the niggas from fuckin' up they good thang.

Appointed spokesmen, although held in contempt, are acceptable if they push for the attainment of concessions for the community at large. Even those who have become so far removed from the burdens of the rank and file that they "don't know what the deal is" are embraced if they "get over" for the community.

Even more startling than the institutionalization of the riot as a protest weapon, is the institutionalization of antagonistic police actions. Aggressive police action has become a part of life for street people. The sniping incident may fade away but the possibility of a similar occurrence is expected. The Holmes affair and countless others like it have lulled, not only street people but the rank and file as well, into accepting it as part of their urban existence. As a part of the apparatus known as the ghetto.

Mutha fuckin' police went to the man's house (Holmes) and shot the life out of him. Black people ain't said shit. Its gon happen again and again and again!

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<sup>17</sup>Following the shooting incident, the church was looked upon as a spokesman (in addition to an alliance of businessmen). A black man was also appointed as head of a committee to "study problems between police and citizens."

They kill somebody every now and then and it dies down. That makes Omaha like other cities. Black people don't get excited . . . all they want to do is raise a family. That's the way it is around here.

When a group of people expect and predict future conflicts between police and citizens that may end in death, we are no longer talking about a series of unrelated events. The subject becomes the perpetual state of war between the black community and the guardians of the American social structure. The war is not a recent phenomena but has been raging since West African culture first clashed with the ideals of the western world. The overseers of the slave quarter have since become "our men in blue."

(11) Conclusion: Similarities and Differences

The shootings allowed the research enterprise to examine the attitudes of the church, and those of street people, in regards to events of importance to both social categories. The attitudes paralleled one another in that both social categories have serious questions about the role of the police in the black community. The major difference, in expressed attitudes, is that street people were more hostile. Aggressive expressions are expected since street people come in direct contact with the police more often.

Clearly, the church cannot cater to street people by "lookin' to the skies for a God" but the Black Church is a flexible institution and has the potential to cater to a

diversified group of people. Although the church lapsed into the religious routine of getting on our knees and praying, returning to God, and "gettin' ready," it and the street people exhibited common attitudes about "down-town." For the social structures is the source of trials and tribulations as well as being the creator and maintainer of the sorted realities of the street corner.

Activism has long been a tradition of the Black Church. The problem with tradition is that it is grounded in historical achievements and not contemporary forms of action. The question is, can the church overcome the business ways which are a part of its institutional form, and tap the spiritual forces that cut across all social categories and ties all black folks together? Is it possible for the church to make this step or is it simply too late because she has already taken steps in the wrong direction? If she has been infected with the business morbidity of the dominant culture, she, too, is part of the apparatus enslaving the black community.

The Church: A Natural Setting for the  
Development of Activism

A. A Discussion of Values in Research Settings

Social researchers are often guided by the fallacy of "objectivity." Objectivity amounts to a constant

questioning of how and under what circumstances the researcher conducts his work. If overemphasized, there is the danger that the researcher can become carried away with the methodological aspects of his work. More emphasis is given to methods of attaining exactness and non-involvement than to the humanistic aspects of research projects.

The role of scientist demands exactness, which has, so the method books say, a high degree of correlation with detachment. For this researcher, detachment from a situation that involves the immorality of one group of people toward another is a scientific myth. The notion of detachment becomes increasingly contradictory when the researcher, and society as well, identifies himself as a member of the oppressed group.

By being uninvolved, detached, and "scientific," the researcher is at the same time attaching himself to the group responsible for the immorality. If, to achieve exactness, a researcher detaches himself from a set of conditions which need changing, he becomes a part of that which needs to be changed. Scientific detachment should be called what it is - professionalization.

Being a professional means that one acquires a certain status which sets himself and his peers apart from the remainder of society. Status is primarily the result of following the rules of the "scientific method" and the

scientific method is not enough to warrant a separation from the woes of society.

Social researchers, whether socialized by the rigid commandments of graduate school into believing they are scientist or not, are part of the society from which they so diligently seek out an occupation and identity. If they do not seek to correct the infectious pathological disorders of society, their detachment will not make them immune to the spreading disease.

The foregoing statements are, to say the least, clear cut value judgments. They are, in many "scientific" circles, a violation of the "norm." The remainder of this chapter will go a step further. The researcher, in being consistent with his research values, or lack of "values," will explore the potential of the church as an arena for activism. To be scholarly is not enough; scholarly research was and is, since it explains without suggesting solutions, a status quo endeavor.

#### B. The Setting

Religion and the church have guided black people through several hundred years of oppressive conditions. In Reverend Wilson's words, the church is "the bridge that brought us over." Blacks, throughout history, have been given a ray of hope by being able to envision a life lying

beyond this world. Just as important, the church as an organizational form has been a key factor in the political, economic, and social progression of the black community. It has been a prime factor in the movement from slavery to freedom and from the horrors of the rural south to a new set of inhuman condition in the indigenous colonies (ghettos) of the urban north. The bridge has been crossed and on this side we are faced with a set of conditions whose complexity is yet to be fully understood.

The organizational structure of the Black Church, we feel, is still a viable tool and should not be abandoned. We cannot, however, ignore the fact that metaphysical ends in the face of hostility is not a means of changing the sources of that hostility. All that is not directed at change is supportive of the conditions that need changing.

Denouncing the transcendental aims of the church does not necessarily mean the dumping of an organizational form which has incorporated elements of black culture. It is possible to communicate with the religious-minded members of the church for we are not certain whether they are bound together by belief in a deity or by the forces of oppression that surround them.

The church is a natural setting for the presentation of political messages. The diffused power of the pulpit will permit a minister, and other non-religious persons as well,

to discuss current affairs. No longer is the pulpit strictly the domain of the clergy, it is a forum from which important secular issue may be discussed. The devoutly religious no doubt have reservations about the non-religious usage of the pulpit but they are aware of that the church is a dynamic social system. Political messages will not spell the end of transcendentalism, the two can hopefully exist simultaneously. Such a proposition is not so farfetched when we recall that, other-worldly notions exist at the same time that the minister builds a conception of the white world through his "down home stories," pitting the church against the metro environment, and by telling anecdotes on black life. These stories and strategies are covert political expressions since they inform the congregation of the price paid for crossing the bridge. Teaching black people where they came from is static in many respects but acquiring a sense of history is necessary if blacks are to know where they are going.

The church is the most frequently found physical structure in the black community. It is blessed with a box to stand behind, an interacting audience based on the practice of free speech, and it is accessible (with the approval of the leadership), to any and all personalities irregardless of civic and political pressures from "downtown." This, in effect, means that the church is free to



sponsor events which do not meet with the approval of the authorities.

The church draws from a wide variety of community actors and despite the anti-religious feelings of some, the institution still has community validation. The institution is able to meet the needs of non-religious persons by being a cultural phenomena. In doing so, it provides entertainment in the form of music, social functions, and the oratory skills of the minister which he supplements with a variety of strategies and techniques. The church is able to draw from the opposite pole of the community because street life, and the idea of being at the "crossroads," is the secular counterpart to living in a troubled world. Likewise we find that, within the church itself, shouters have goals that carry sacred-secular connotations.

Black religious institutions are a readily available form of organization. Considering the need for an organizational base in political activism, this is an important fact. Those wishing to form their own organization can easily do so. The ability to form a church in the absence of finances is conducive to enterprising organizers. The overhead is relatively low in the progression from house-church to store-front to main-line type of church building. Given the economic position of blacks, house churches and store fronts are the most feasible way to begin organizing.

Once the organization is put together, economic support is extractable from the membership. The congregation achieves two things by building from within. They acquire a sense of solidarity by working together toward a common goal while using their own resources. Secondly, the church is freed from dependence on agencies found outside of the black community. The head of the church becomes independent, owing allegiance only to his followers. The minister is free to pursue his goals as the people are held together by doing together. In brief, the Black Church is an institution springing out of the black community which is free from white control.

Social relations with other religious bodies are beneficial in that the clergy are able to enter into reciprocal economic relations with one another. The role of the Ministerial Alliance in the shooting incidents indicates that various churches are capable of combining for political gains as well. The combining of churches in this fashion are perhaps the most effective at the local level. It is doubtful whether interdenominational rivalries can be overcome at the regional or national level. Organizations such as the National Baptist Convention, provide a solidified force on the national level but as of now there is no strong personality dominating it. The emergence of a "charismatic" figure and a national political movement seems unlikely at

this point in time.

Rather than be disillusioned by the failure to develop a national movement, activist should concentrate on building at the local level. Decentralization is more in line with the potential of the church. Social change requires long term investments. The black community has hopefully learned from the King era - they have perhaps learned that change is generational and not a sudden overnight happening.

Change is then in the hands of the young. We have learned enough from the sixties so that we might, through the church for example, instruct our growth on the politics of black existence. The charismatic oratorical presentations by black ministers, lively music, and status enhancing structures are not enough.

The church must offer more concrete programs to the youth for they are the new emerging sub-group. Religion in itself cannot provide the necessary income required for a "normal" standard of living, nor can it ease the pains of social inequality. The recent popularity of food and paramedical programs instituted by more radical organizations (Panthers, S.L.A.) reflect upon the failings of the church.

The church no longer has a monopoly on the attention of the black community and must share political authority with other agencies, institutions and individuals. The

coalition that is needed, the desire to cater to the needs of the rank and file, and the fusion of religion and politics, are dependent upon the minister. It all rides on whether he is a warrior . . . or a pimp.

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