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**Creating Selves:  
An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Self and Creativity in  
African American Religion**

by

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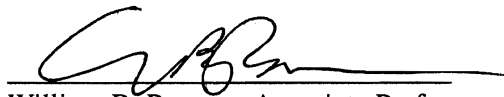
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## **ABSTRACT**

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African American religious studies has offered a selective treatment of self. In such discourse, self is equated to a collective identity solely premised upon liberation from multidimensional forms of social oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism. This dissertation, unlike previous treatments, offers a multidimensional model of self. Specifically, it argues that African American religion serves as viable outlets for the expression of multiple forms of self—personal, collective, and dynamical selves. An interdisciplinary approach consisting of social psychology, object relations theory, and anthropology of religion is used to examine various self formations among adherents in African American Spiritual(ist) churches in New Orleans. Results from these analyses reveal an inextricable interconnectedness between religion, creativity, and self-expression. Namely, New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches serve as outlets in which individual adherents utilize creative acts/products to express various views of themselves. These results move scholarly treatments of self in African American religious studies beyond a collective point of view by offering a multidimensional model of self premised notions of collectivity, individuality, and fluidity.

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## Introduction

### An Exploration of “Self” in African American Religious Studies

African American religious studies, particularly as presented in African American religious discourse concerned with pastoral theology, has offered a selective treatment of *self*. In such discourse, self is equated to a collective identity solely premised upon liberation from multidimensional forms of social oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism.<sup>1</sup> Such a treatment of self privileges, whether consciously and/or unconsciously, communal identity through the downplaying of intragroup differences. In short, collective survival “takes precedence over individual concerns.”<sup>2</sup> This collectively oriented stance represses expressions of self in individual experiences creating an ethos in which individual differences are obliged to submit to a “shared social categor[ical] membership.”<sup>3</sup> Hence any possibilities of heterogeneous modes of self-expressions are collapsed into a single, homogenous and fixed mode of selfhood—as expressed in the notion of an African American *communal* identity instigated and maintained by a “survivalist religion,”<sup>4</sup> a divinely inspired belief system that provides African Americans with the “creative strength to confront with great courage, the life denying forces” working against their humanity.<sup>5</sup> Such a reduction of self to a communal response brings

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<sup>1</sup> See Edward P. Wimberly and Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Liberation and Wholeness: The Conversion Experiences of Black People in Slavery and Freedom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986); Carroll Watkins-Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999); Lee Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Watkins-Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 68.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Turner et al., “Self and the Collective: Cognition and Social Context,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20 (1994): 455.

<sup>4</sup> Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls*, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 106.

a few questions to the forefront: In what ways would unpacking complex notions of self contribute to African American religious studies scholarship? How can the immense complexities of self be captured and highlighted? How does one capture multiple selves expressed by the individual without negating self-dimensionality that are relational and communally oriented? Hence, such pertinent questions serve as driving forces for this dissertation.

### **Primary Argument**

Challenging prevailing efforts in African American religious studies to reduce self to a singular notion of collective identity, *Creating Selves* argues for a multidimensional model of self—self being understood here as how one views him/herself—based upon a social psychological interpretative framework. This dissertation, specifically, asserts that African American religion, as particularly manifested in the doctrinal beliefs of African American Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans, serve as outlets that individuals utilize to express three views of self—*personal* self, *collective* self, and *dynamical* self. Such a treatment of self evades a privileging of a collective stance by offering a multidimensional approach robust enough to hold notions of collectivity and individuality in tension.

*Creating Selves*, furthermore, seeks to use an under-explored African American religious tradition, African American Spiritual(ist)<sup>6</sup> churches, as well as underused methodologies, such as psychology of religion, social psychology, and cross-disciplinary

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<sup>6</sup> This term will be used throughout the dissertation. It attempts to preserve the names used in the origination of earlier churches, “spiritualist” while maintaining the integrity of many of these bodies adoption of the term “spiritual” in order to separate themselves from American Spiritualism. Therefore, three terms will be used: Spiritual(ist), Spiritualist (1920-1940s), and Spiritual (mid to late 1940s to current-day).

analyses of human creativity, to expand renderings of self beyond fixed borders of identity politics and communal orientations. Such an expansion is important in African American religious studies for three reasons: (1) affords an interpretative way of capturing how religion functions for the individual without negating the importance of collective function; (2) moves African American religious functionality beyond a posture of resistance against societal oppressions and a reduction to maintaining group solidarity by using under-appreciated methodologies and traditions; and lastly (3) expands the topical terrain of African American religion by treating marginalized conceptions like that of the “self.” Overall, viewing self as one characterized by multidimensionality provides a method of examining religious bodies in regard to their doctrinal systems and ritualistic activities without eliminating the importance of human participation and creativity in the instigation, maturation, and alteration of those same doctrines and activities.

### **Literature Review: Treatment of Self in African American Religious Studies**

Currently there are no texts within African American religious discourse that offer a comprehensive treatment of self; however, African American pastoral care and theology offers some implicit articulations of self. *Liberation and Wholeness: The Conversion Experiences of Black People in Slavery and Freedom* by Edward Wimberly and Anne Streaty Wimberly represents such a text in that it mentions self, but only in relationship to their larger concern, African American conversion experience. For them the conversion experience serves as a space in which personality integration occurs. The old self undergoes a transformation yielding a new self. Unlike the former’s preoccupation with materiality, the latter is centered on matters of spirituality. Hence, the Wimberlys treat the

self as an orientation either towards the world, which they identify as a self-serving orientation i.e. an “idolatrous center,” or towards the spiritual matters that are seen as communally oriented. Since in this way self’s adaptability is equitable to personality integration, orientation towards participation in matters of the collective represents an individual personality that is healthy. Conversion experiences yielding isolation are pathological according the Wimberlys. Specifically, isolation is devoid of a communal interpretation of the conversion experience that negates the importance of community in personal conversion affairs; the personal points to larger social perspective for the Wimberlys.

The Wimberlys’ representation of self-as-orientation seems to give self some degree of categorical freedom; however, their restriction of self to an either/or choice mitigated by Christianity places rigid limits on the flexibility of self as expressed in a variety of African American religious contexts in particular and the variation of African American life experiences in general. According to them, self, if it is not to be considered “idolatrous,” must move towards God and this move entails a shift towards community. Specifically, the Wimberlys characterize this movement as a “push” beyond the intimacy and personal boundaries of religious experience toward community.<sup>7</sup> In this way the personal conversion experience serves solely as a springboard in the communal scheme of things. Furthermore, their limited use of psychology of religion, particularly the employment of only one stage in Fowler’s 6-stage system of faith development to rationalize this communal interpretation ignores the continual tensions acknowledged by

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<sup>7</sup> Wimberly and Wimberly, *Liberation and Wholeness*, 73.

the psychoanalyst himself.<sup>8</sup> Particularly, the strained relationship existing between a conforming self whose identity is based upon communally ascribed meanings and an internally developing self grappling to apprehend individuality amongst group membership identity is ignored by the Wimberlys. Acknowledgement of this type of strain could have afforded them a view of self that exceeds one-dimensionality.

Another text of pastoral theology that indirectly addresses a notion of self is *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls* by Lee Butler; this work offers a conception of self through a comprehensive explication of African American identity. Butler defines identity as a perception of self achieved through intra-psychical influences and external relationships occurring within an external reality.<sup>9</sup> Although he maintains the importance of both environments, internal and external, he is adamant about the importance of relationships in identity formation. Butler states:

As I have already stated, focusing on identity through the question, “Who am I?” is, however, an individualistic way of attending to identity. Although all African Americans at some point will explore their identity by asking, “Who am I?” that question is not the best question. Because the African self is not grounded in individualism, we should *always* [emphasis added] reshape the question to be, “Who are we?”<sup>10</sup>

In short, Butler’s conception of identity is relational. Taking it a step further, it is collective in that he utilizes a relational-oriented notion of identity to build a theoretical case for African American identity formation, a complex communal identity influenced by such factors as race, gender, and religion. Butler introduces the Theory of African American Communal Identity Formation (TAACIF) as an interdisciplinary framework

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<sup>8</sup> James W. Fowler, *The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 117-199.

<sup>9</sup> Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls*, 3.

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

robust enough to handle the complexities surrounding the crystallization of African American identity.

Self, although still treated in relationship to identity, maintains a position in the overall framework of Butler's TAACIF. He primarily stresses the importance that conceptions of self play in the psyche adjustment of African Americans, particularly how this adaptation is dependent upon the psyche's perception of self-concept—a concept he maintains is rooted in African spirituality that concerns itself with the survival of the collective. Hence, self “as” a concept is not only psychically based, but it also receives its orientation from a communally driven element Butler recognizes as spiritual. In addition, Butler illustrates how specific issues such as emotional development, ontological longing, comprehending societal rules, and interplay between identity/play operate within the foundational portion of the TAACIF yielding an African American self—guided by the “historical African self.”<sup>11</sup> It is important to denote that this African notion of self, in the constructive stage of his model, becomes African spirituality or the sole director in the communal activities of African American life experiences. In short both the African American and African selves are transformed for the initiation and maintenance of collective aspects in the African American community.

While Butler is to be commended for his inclusion of self within the TAACIF framework, his presentation of a racialized self is problematic. Butler does not acknowledge within this racialized notion of self—African American self and/or African self—the same type of complexity he recognizes in regard to African American identity. Instead the racialized self is presented simply as a universal. Furthermore, Butler's use of

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, *Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls*, 161.

a universal communally driven historical African self to undergird his proposed identity framework fails to consider complexities associated with the African concept of communalism recognized, for example, in Akan philosophical thought as espoused by Kwame Gyekye. Communalism, according to Gyekye, contains inherent tension between “the articulation of the uniqueness of the individual and his or her relationship to society.”<sup>12</sup> Attempted resolution to this continuous tension occurs through recognizing the place and importance of expressing individualism within a system of communalism without the former being totally consumed by the latter. Butler’s failure to incorporate such complexities yields an identity structure which gives little attention to how factors such as gender, classism, and religion occurring within the *individual experiences* of African Americans play a part in the formation of multifarious dimensions of African American identity.

Speaking from a Womanist perspective Carroll Watkins Ali, in her work entitled *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* treats self only in relationship to the construction of a pastoral theology premised upon cultural context, specifically the contextual experience of poor African American women. For her such an African American milieu is characterized by two primary concerns: (1) communal survival and (2) collective liberation from oppression. It is here that Watkins Ali addresses self within the African American context in that she explicitly acknowledges the way in which self operates in the manifestation of communal survival and liberation. Survival is two-fold for Watkins Ali. First, it resists dehumanizing societal oppressive forces through political means in order to “provide hope in view of the existential

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<sup>12</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: An Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 159.

dilemmas of African Americans.”<sup>13</sup> Survival, secondly, involves the psychological and emotional recapturing of self through the recovery of African cultural elements that have been stripped away as a result of such systematic oppression. In short, political resistance serves as a catalyst for psychological recovery of the “African self.”<sup>14</sup> Watkins Ali’s conception of liberation also explicitly involves self, specifically the capacity to “self-determine.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, liberation involves a deliberate release from all forms of domination creating an ethos of self-determination in which African Americans have the freedom to decide their own social, political, economical, and psychological status.

As captured in the African American collective experience of survival and liberation, self, according to Watkins Ali maintains a communal orientation. Survival involves communal self-restoration and self-determination. She argues that “survival [is] not do to one’s individual strength [but is] a result of the collective support, resistance, and resilience of the community.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, for her, self is not individually-oriented instead it is representative of the group experience of African Americans in general and poor African American women in particular; self is the collective and takes priority over any form of individualism. This precedence of the collective appears in Watkins Ali’s utilization and interpretation of case studies involving African American women. Although she presents the experiences of two African American women as separate, her analysis of them involves highlighting commonalities—economic oppression, feelings of hopelessness, and loneliness— between them. In other words, their “common existential

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<sup>13</sup> Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 117.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 113. She utilizes this term as conceived in Black psychology, specifically in African-centered psychological frameworks expressed by figures like Wade Nobles and Molefi Kete Asante.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 19.



dilemma” takes center stage over differences in their education and economic level that Watkins Ali acknowledge throughout the case studies.<sup>17</sup> Such a move, she assures, is necessary in order to avoid the trappings of individualism in order to continuously move in the direction of securing holistic survival and liberation for African American people as a collective.

Watkins Ali, although establishing a connection between self and the African American contextual experience, presents a monolithic depiction of self that is communally oriented, a view that negates the possible complexities surrounding the term. Whether expressed in her depiction of survival or liberation, self for her is not representative, or, for that matter explicitly inclusive of the individual experience, but self denotes the focalization of many experiences into one collective experience. In other words, collective notions of self subsume individual expressions of self. Additionally, this self-as-collective maintains dominance over unique circumstances occurring in the lives of African Americans on an individual basis, as seen in Watkins Ali interpretative compounding of individual case studies of African American women into a singular form. Such an ethos of communal privileging minimizes the participatory role of individual experience in notions of self. Treating self as a contextually driven process takes into consideration multiple expressions of self that are subjected to collective, relational, and/or individual influences allowing for a more robust viewing of complexities surrounding self.

Whether presented as an orientation towards Christianity, a racialized construct of identity formation, or a restorative agent, self is reduced to a collective form of identity in

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<sup>17</sup> Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 3.

the works of Edward Wimberly, Anne Streaty Wimberly, Lee Butler, and Carroll Watkins Ali, respectively. Moving self beyond these fixed borders of collectivity requires an examination of the origin of such fixations. This dissertation argues that the fixing of self is a methodological issue. The employment of specific sociological and historical methods in African American religious studies aid in the development of a treatment of self that is collectively oriented. The chapters that follow problematize one such fixating methodology, offer an alternative interpretative framework, and, through its application introduce a *multidimensional* notion of self to African American religious studies.

### **Layout of Chapters**

The opening chapter of this dissertation, “Fixed Function: A Historical Mapping of Methodological Fixation of Function in the Sociology of African American Religion,” asserts that social analyses of African American religion privileges integrative functionality, an interpretative stance equating function with the maintenance of social integration. The construction of a historical map of major social examinations of African American religion reveals a diverse terrain of theoretical contributions made by both sociologists and sociologists of religion to the social study of African American religion. From W.E.B. Du Bois’ positing of Negro religion as a means to organize social activities/behaviors to Cheryl Townsend Gilkes’ proposing African American religion as an outlet for communal agency and survival in the face of multidimensional modes of societal oppression, theoretical diversity in regard to functionality is captured in social analyses of African American religion. Such mapping also uncovers a strand connecting these seemingly varying social theories advanced by sociologists included in this chapter. Each of these theorists applies an interpretative frame known as the *Du Boisian frame* in

their social examinations of African American religion. Usage of this frame forefronts the function of African American religion. Specifically, African American religion is posited as a social part whose primary function involves maintenance of the African American community as a whole. African American religion, then, is reduced to social functioning. Function is socially “fixed.” In this type of treatment, what happens to the ways African American religion functions for the individual? Better yet, is it possible to conduct a social examination of African American religion that moves beyond collective functionality without negating the importance of social function? In order to accomplish such a methodological feat, a shift in the focus of the social analysis is required. Specifically, this chapter ends with a call to move the individual to the center of social investigations of African American religion. The individual here being defined as one who constantly negotiates oppositional desires for group solidarity and individual differentiation. With the individual as an embodiment of complex social negotiations at the center of analysis, a robust view of how African American religion functions for the individual and the group are held in tension.

While the previous chapter focuses on the methodological fixing of function in sociological approaches to African American religion, chapter 2, “Creating ‘Selves’: An Employment of a Theory of Self and Creativity in the Extension of African American Religion Functionality,” offers a social psychological interpretative framework as a corrective. Two elements guide this approach. The first element posits self as multidimensional in that an individual desires to view or define him/herself in multiple ways. Specifically, the individual expresses three notions of self-interpretation: personal self, collective self, and dynamical self. The second element characterizing this social

psychological model conceives of religion as a “creative medium.” As medium, religion offers individuals raw materials in the forms of symbols, ideas, and objects that may be used by them to create concrete products. Products signifying real existence, particular realities, and/or actual material substances are creative possibilities. Self-interpretations are counted among these possibilities. Creative products are concrete manifestations of various notions of self in which the creator attempts to express through the creative act. This chapter culminates in the presentation of brief examples meant to further solidify the interconnectivity between religion, creativity, and self. Particularly these examples illustrate how individual adherents of African American Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans use the Uncle Bucket ritual and Candle Drill ritual as media to express multiple views of themselves. The utilization of a social psychological approach premised upon a multidimensional conception of self and a positing of religion as creative medium offers a different view of the functionality of African American religion than advanced by social theorists mapped in chapter one. African American religion in general and Spiritual(ist) churches in particular serve as viable outlets in which individuals employ creativity to express multiple modes of self-interpretations. Such an argument expands African American functionality in such a way that it includes social function without negating the role religion also plays in the everyday experiences of the individual.

Although a brief application of the social psychological interpretative approach occurs in chapter 2, the last chapter of this dissertation offers a more robust employment of this framework using doctrinal principles and ritualistic activities of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches. A history of these churches, however, precedes this praxis portion of the dissertation. A historical narrative of New Orleans Spiritual(ist)s churches from the

early 1920s to the present-day takes center stage in the third chapter, “Spiritualism in the Big Easy.” While the first section explores the establishment of Spiritualist churches by Mother Leafy Anderson and its growth during the period 1920-1927, the second section highlights the major contributions of other early Spiritualist mothers—mainly those of Mother Catherine Seals, Mother Kate Francis, and Mother Clara James Hyde—during the mid-1920s through the late 1930s. Due to contributions of these four early mothers, a rich Spiritualist doctrinal framework characterized by mediumship, spiritual guides, conjuration, healing, and prophecy had been created by 1940. The succeeding two decades of the New Orleans Spiritual(ist) movement were characterized by many significant transitions. The adoption of a more explicitly Christianized form of Spiritualism (Divine Spiritualism), usage of “Spiritual” instead of “Spiritualist” as a designating term of religious identity, and occurrence of multiple schisms due to doctrinal disagreements and gender discrimination in leadership ranks represent major shifts that are captured in the third section. Despite these major transitions, the Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans continued to serve as a religious force well into the late 1980s. Exploring contributions of Archbishop E. J. Johnson and Archbishop Lydia Gilford, section four presents a maturing Spiritual(ist) movement marked by both a steady growth in its membership and an expansion of its doctrinal/ritual framework. The condition of Spiritual(ist) churches before the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina and the geographical terrain of these same churches in a city currently undergoing re-development are taken up in the last two sections of this dissertation’s third chapter.

This final chapter, “Single Symbol, Multiple Selves,” is the praxis portion of this dissertation. The first section offers an examination of how Black Hawk became a master

symbol in New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches. Multiple meanings, interpretations, and applications are ascribed onto the symbol of Black Hawk in the Spiritual(ist) churches. An examination of multiple symbols allows for a more robust capturing of complexities is an interpretative assumption that this chapter's focus on a single symbol—Black Hawk—seeks to problematize. This chapter, in addition to analyzing a single symbol, asserts that Bishop Jackson represents a viable subject in an analysis of African American religion. In this way, the various ways Bishop Jackson utilizes Black Hawk to negotiate conflicting desires to express selves based on collectivity/individuality moves to the forefront of the analysis. Bishop Jackson's spiritual biography serves as a transition point, signaling a movement to the praxis portion of the chapter. Sections three through five represent case studies, including descriptions and analyzes of various Black Hawk rituals. A public Black Hawk service is presented in section three, while a one-on-one Black Hawk fellowship and a private Black Hawk healing ritual are explored in sections four and five, respectively. Combined, all three case studies illustrate the variety of ways Bishop Jackson as an *individual* utilizes Black Hawk in public/private ritualized contexts to articulate multiple views of himself.

A summation of the dissertation's primary arguments and implications of this research for African American religious studies are taken up in the conclusion. Three arguments are considered: (1) self is multidimensional; (2) multiple forms of self are expressed in African American religion; and (3) the individual as a negotiator of sociological duality is a viable subject for an analysis of African American religion. An expansion of subject matter, methodological usage, and subject consideration represent major implications offered in the final section of *Creating Selves*.

## Chapter 1

### **“Fixed” Function: A Historical Mapping of the Fixing of Function in the Sociology of African American Religion**

Religion is a practical social concern, and the reality of its objective pole must in some sense be validated by communal consensus. But, at the same time, it is a mode of release from the entanglements of the social, and it is the awareness of an objectivity that lies beyond the social...<sup>18</sup>

In his preliminary discussion of a religious hermeneutic, historian of religion Charles Long recognizes two dualistic tendencies associated with religion. Religion, as the opening excerpt suggests is simultaneously a “social concern” and a “mode of release from the entanglements of [this same] social concern.” Sociologists like W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, C. Eric Lincoln and a host of others, through their detail social analyses of African American religion, have provided vital theories concerning the social tendency of religion.<sup>19</sup> Such a privileging of the social dimension, however, has created a dominant interpretative storyline of integrative functionality (how religion functions) in the study of African American religion that forefronts the collective at the expense of the individual. Thus, the primary aim of this chapter is to illustrate the historical development of such a sociological narrative and to demonstrate how this interpretative framework has affixed the functionality of African American religion to the collective experience. The chapter, then, extends the function of African American religion beyond a sole emphasis

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<sup>18</sup> Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora: The Davies Group, 1995), 39.

<sup>19</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church: Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903; reprint, Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2003); E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964; reprint, New York: Schocken, 1974); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

on social integration and solidarity by introducing the *individual* as a viable departure of social interpretations of African American religion. The individual is treated as one constantly negotiating desires for collectivity/individuality in such a way as to express multiple views of him/herself. Therefore, chapter one ends with establishing the role religion in general and African American religion in particular plays in the individual's expression of multiple self-interpretations.

### **Historical Mapping of the Sociology of African American Religion**

#### *W.E.B. Du Bois: Pioneer of Sociology of (African American) Religion*

Any mapping of the sociology of African American religion must begin with W.E.B. Du Bois, a pioneer of both American sociology and sociology of religion.<sup>20</sup> Du Bois' conception of sociology placed humans at the center. More specifically, Du Bois saw human actions as the proper subject of social analysis.<sup>21</sup> For him, such actions were far from simple in their operations; instead human actions embodied a certain paradox in that they contained within them both calculable and incalculable elements, denoted as law and chance, respectively.<sup>22</sup> Determining the boundaries of each of these elements embodied

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<sup>20</sup> There have been scholarly attempts to show the significant role of Du Bois in the American sociological enterprise. See, for example, Dan S. Green, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois* (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts); Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver, "W.E.B. Du Bois: A Case in the Sociology of Sociological Negation," *Phylon* 37 (1976): 308-333; Pierre Saint-Arnaud, "W.E.B. Du Bois: Scientific Sociology and Exclusion," in *African American Pioneers of Sociology: A Critical History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 121-156.

<sup>21</sup> Du Bois credits his exposure to German intellectual thought while at the University of Berlin for his emphasis on human activity as a focal point in sociology. See *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26-48. Also, for a study of specific German political thinkers that influenced Du Bois, see Kenneth D. Barkin, "Berlin Days, 1892-1894," *boundary 2* 27 (2000): 79-101.

<sup>22</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "Sociology Hesitant," *boundary 2* 27 (2000): 41.



within human action, according to Du Bois, was the primary task of the sociological enterprise:

Looking over the world, we see evidence of the reign of Law; as we rise, however, from the physical to the human there comes not simply complication and interaction of forces but traces of indeterminate force until in the realm of higher action we have Chance—that is actions undetermined by and independent of actions gone before. The duty of science, then, is to measure carefully the limits of this Chance of human conduct...Sociology, then, is the Science that seeks the limits of Chance in human conduct.<sup>23</sup>

Du Bois sought to move sociology away from descriptive metaphysical explanations of society towards the examination of paradoxical actions of humanity. These actions were not operative in a lone capacity, but interacted with societal conditions in creating what Du Bois called, the “social problem.” The social problem, in the words of Du Bois, was “the failure of an organized social group to realize its group ideals, through the inability to adapt a certain desired line of action to given conditions of life.”<sup>24</sup> At the center of the social problem, then, was the failure to recognize collective “ideals.” The inability to adapt human actions served as a precursor to this failure. Du Bois utilized suffrage in the United States to illustrate the development of a social problem. “If a government founded on universal manhood suffrage has a portion of its population so ignorant as to be unable to vote intelligently, such ignorance becomes a menacing social problem.”<sup>25</sup> Du Bois’ notion of a social problem (ignorance) involved establishing an inextricable relationship between human actions (restricted suffrage and limited voter education) and conditions (lack of intelligent voting). He maintained that these two factors, action and conditions, were always changing. Because they led to the development of social problems, any

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<sup>23</sup> Du Bois, “Sociology Hesitant,” 44.

<sup>24</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 11 (1898): 2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

changes to one caused a directly proportional change in the other. “A social problem is ever a relation between conditions and action, and as conditions and actions vary and change from group to group from time to time and from place to place, so social problems change, develop, and grow,” Du Bois maintained.<sup>26</sup> Thus, sociology’s subject of investigation, according to him, was not just humans in and of themselves but human complexities captured in their actions/reactions to vacillating societal dilemmas.

Beyond his identification of the social problem as the task of sociology, Du Bois expanded both sociological methodology and subject-matter considered by sociologists during the close of the nineteenth century. Specifically, he interjected a new quantitative methodological approach through the examination of the “social phenomena arising from the presence in the [United States] of eight million persons of African descent.”<sup>27</sup> The lives of Negroes were human “laboratories” in which Du Bois would apply and advance his empirically based methodology. For example, in his article, “The Laboratory in Sociology at Atlanta University,” he identified the overall purpose driving sociology courses as “an attempt to study systematically conditions of living right around the university and to compare these conditions elsewhere.”<sup>28</sup> Du Bois suggested the primary function of such an analysis was to classify, categorize, and measure human actions and conditions as contained within social problems. The “social study,”<sup>29</sup> then, became the very tool that would accomplish this methodological feat. Du Bois’ *The Philadelphia*

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<sup>26</sup> Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>28</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Laboratory in Sociology at Atlanta University,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* XXI (1903): 161.

<sup>29</sup> Du Bois utilizes social “study” and “survey” interchangeably.

*Negro*,<sup>30</sup> one of the first comprehensive social surveys in general<sup>31</sup> and the first of its kind to focus on the Negro as a social group in particular, meticulously exemplified his systematic, empirical approach to social analysis. The text opened with a historical examination or what he called a “general survey,” a comprehensive historical account of Negroes in Philadelphia.<sup>32</sup> Over sixty laws, bills, acts, charters, court cases, and petitions were used by Du Bois to construct a historical narrative of Negro life in Philadelphia from 1682-1895.<sup>33</sup> A 1700 bill regulating slave marriages in Pennsylvania; an 1827 act proposing “no sale of fugitive slaves in the state of Pennsylvania; and an 1863 petition against the Pennsylvania Senate committee’s denial of the “immigration of freedman” to the state—only represented three out the sixty primary documents used by Du Bois in his social survey of the Negroes of Philadelphia.<sup>34</sup> This implementation of historical accounts into social analysis became one of Du Bois’ marker. In addition to a general survey of history, Du Bois stressed the inclusion of a statistical component in the structure of the social study. For example, in his study of Negroes in Philadelphia, he designed and administered “schedules”<sup>35</sup> to over nine thousand residents within the

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<sup>30</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1973).

<sup>31</sup> The Pittsburgh Survey of 1907 is given this credit in much of the early literature concerning the development of sociological methods and thought. See E. W. Burgess, “The Social Survey a Field for Constructive Service by Departments of Sociology,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 21 (1916), 493; Carol Aronovici, *The Social Survey* (Philadelphia: The Harper Press, 1916), 223; Emory S. Bogardus, *Introduction to Sociology* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1917), 314; Emory S. Bogardus, *A History of Social Thought* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1922), 483.

<sup>32</sup> Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix B of *The Philadelphia Negro*, 411-418.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> These were surveys constructed by Du Bois. For various schedules along with corresponding instructions he used in the Philadelphia study, refer to Appendix A.

Seventh Ward neighborhood. These modes of social measurement allowed him to gather statistical data, included but not limited to individual and family demographics, infrastructure of familial dwelling places, income, and institution types found in the community. Captured in the “Final Word” of *The Philadelphia Negro* was the last task of the social study, a sociological conjoining of statistical information and historical accounts. Du Bois’ introduction of the comprehensive survey to the young field of American sociology gave emerging sociologists a scientific method in which to examine society. Furthermore, his social survey was his attempt to “put science into sociology through a study of the condition and problems of [the Negro],” a group that sociologists did not deem as viable subject material.<sup>36</sup>

Armed with a historically relevant, empirically-based sociology, Du Bois sought to provide a systematic social analysis of Negro life in the United States, which included extensive studies on the religious life of Negroes, making him one of the earliest American sociologist of religion.<sup>37</sup> His social analysis of religion can be found in several publications: *The Philadelphia Negro*, *The Negro in the South*, and *Souls of Black Folk*, works containing sections committed to the discussion of religion, and *The Negro Church*, one of the earliest comprehensive social investigation of religion in the United States. Negro religion, particularly as expressed in the Negro Church, for Du Bois represented a concrete social reality produced in the bosom of social history. Therefore, a social analysis of the religious orientation of Negroes in general and the Negro Church in

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<sup>36</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Phil Zuckerman has sought to highlight Du Bois’ contribution as a sociologist of religion. See, for example, *Du Bois on Religion* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000); “The Sociology of Religion of W.E.B. Du Bois,” *Sociology of Religion* 63 (2002): 239-253.

particular involved a historical “crawling back,” a notion captured in both *The Negro in the South* and *Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>38</sup> He maintained in the former “the essence of a study of religion in the South is a study of the ethics of slavery and emancipation.”<sup>39</sup>

Concerning the latter, he stated, “No such institution as the Negro Church could rear itself without definite historical foundations.”<sup>40</sup> For Du Bois, the Negro Church represented a concrete institution whose formation was the result of exerted political, social, and historical forces on the lives of Negroes. Thus, a social examination of religion, especially as manifested in the religion as practiced by Negroes in the United States, began with establishing a historical context. For example, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, he proposed Africa as the initiating point for the religious lives of Negroes in that before the Middle Passage, auction blocks, and plantation life, the religion of Africans was characterized by “nature worship...through incantation and sacrifice.”<sup>41</sup> According to Du Bois, the Negro church was the remnant of this “African tribal life” and “the sole expression of the organized efforts of the slaves.”<sup>42</sup> For Du Bois this social product not only was an externalized reality resulting from specific historical circumstances, but the Negro Church also represented an institutionalization of human actions captured in the response of slaves and ex-slaves to varying societal conditions. Du Bois, in “Religion in the South,” presented early Negro Christian leaders (slave/free) like George Leile, John

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<sup>38</sup> Historian of religion Charles Long stressed the importance of “crawling back.” This form of returning back to one’s past lived moments possesses value in that this re-visitation may yield “new and counter-creative signification.” See Long, *Significations*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro in the South: His Economic Progress in Relation to his Moral and Religious Development* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company Publishers, 1907), 126.

<sup>40</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 197.

Chavis, Ralph Freeman, and Nat Turner as case studies to illustrate how their pronouncement of Christianity served as modes of resistance against racially based social inequalities.<sup>43</sup> For Du Bois, such resistance became the foundation of the Negro Church in the south.

Du Bois, beyond highlighting origination, also employed a historically informed sociology combined with statistical measurements/methods, to formulate generalizations concerning the role that Negro Church played in the everyday experiences of Negroes. Whether in his social analysis of Philadelphian denominations or his direct observation of worship activities in the rural South, Du Bois' results were conclusive—the Negro Church was the epicenter of the social lives of Negroes. For instance, the opening pages of *The Negro Church*, the eighth published report of Atlanta Conferences, captured this conception of the church's functionality,

The Negro Church [was] the first distinctively Negro American social institution...This institution naturally assumed many functions which the other harshly suppressed had to surrender; the Church became the center of amusements, of what little spontaneous economic activity remained, of education, and of *all* social intercourse.<sup>44</sup> [my emphasis]

The Negro Church was the organizing center for American Negroes. The establishment of primary, second, and collegiate schools and the development of publishing houses to serve the printing demands of the community by Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian denominations are only two of the many organizing markers Du Bois highlighted in his social survey of the Negro Church. Furthermore, he categorized the functionality of this social space. For example, in *The Philadelphia Negro*, the church for Du Bois possessed “tribal functions” and “family functions” as shown in its legislative

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<sup>43</sup> See Du Bois' chapter on “Religion in the South” in *The Negro in the South*, 125-191.

<sup>44</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2003), 5.

authority and its ability to serve as the primary “centre of social life and intercourse,” respectively.<sup>45</sup> In this way, Du Bois’ social analysis of the Negro Church centered on its collective functionality, mainly, the role this ecclesiastical space played in the organization of a social group’s actions/behaviors within a larger social system.

*The Chicago School: Urban Sociology and the Study of Negro Religion*

Approximately ten years after Du Bois’ withdrawal from academic life, the department of sociology at the University of Chicago i.e. the Chicago School became the birthplace of urban sociology, an approach to sociology that would encompass sociological investigations of Negro life in general and Negro religion in particular as expressed in metropolitan settings. Founded in 1892, this department of four scholars, under the leadership of Albion Smalls, sought to release sociology from the restrictive bonds of grand schemes, much like Du Bois, by adopting a form of social analysis that focused on social processes occurring within human interactions. This mode of social examination, as attested to by Small, involves an intentional search for clarity in the dynamics of human experience:

From the sociological point of view it is necessary to get a clear vision, first of all, of the different ways in which human beings associate; of the underlying reasons why they associate; of the forms in which they associate; of the effects, for weal or for woe, of the different forms of human association upon the purposes which instinctively or methodically seek expression through association; of the devices by means of which human associations are controlled; of the aims which emerge in the course of association as the approved objects of human endeavor...<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 201.

<sup>46</sup> Albion Small, “A Prospectus of Sociological Theory,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 26 (1920): 29. For Small’s comprehensive work on sociological theory and method, see *General Sociology: An Exposition of the Main Development in Sociological Theory from Spencer to Ratzenhofer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

This intense focus on human interactions, including the motives, categories, and purposes for such human actions, served as the primary guiding principle in the Chicago School. Detachment from the object of social analysis through the use of empirical methodology combined with theoretical formulations that result from such analysis became another distinguishing mark of the Chicago School. By combining these two approaches of theory and method, this department sought to highlight the importance of scientific method, which involved detachment and neutrality. Social analysis in this way was not guided by a “set of schemes to reform the world.”<sup>47</sup> Social reform was not the goal of social examinations occurring within the Chicago School. The utilization of empirical approaches to construct theoretical formulations concerning human interactions as they occur in society was the cornerstone of the Chicago School, however.

Although heavily influenced by Small, the University of Chicago’s department of sociology, particularly with Robert Park at the helm, became a major center for sociological discourse.<sup>48</sup> Park along with such sociologists as Ernest Burgess and Louis Wirth continued to build upon the department’s commitment to the integration of method and theory through the social analysis of urban cities.<sup>49</sup> The city, according to Park, was a “social laboratory” composed of various modes of interaction that could be subjected to

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<sup>47</sup> Albion Small, *Seminar Notes: The Methodology of the Social Problem* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1898), 113.

<sup>48</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the Chicago School during the 1920s-1930s, see Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986); Luigi Tomasi, *The Tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 1998). For a discussion of the Chicago School of sociology after World War II, see Joseph R. Gusfield, ed., *A Second Chicago School? The Development of a Postwar American Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> See Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess, eds., *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1925); Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1928).



empirically based methodologies.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Park recognized metropolitan cities as containers of human interactions, which marked a continuation of human experience being the core of the Chicago School. With this emphasis on cities “as” laboratories of human interactions, the sociology department at the University of Chicago became the premier center for urban sociology in the United States during the 1920s and early 30s. With this turn toward urban spaces, the Chicago School had at its disposal new material for social examination. The metropolis offered a view of dynamic interactions occurring across different ethnic groups and within one specific group. Such a view served as the foundational basis of Park’s theoretical work on race relations.<sup>51</sup> For instance, he maintained that differences between races were not premised upon stark distinctions of physicality but on cultural differences and rates of assimilation into mainstream American society.<sup>52</sup> Assimilation, a notion at the heart of Park’s theory of race relation, not only represented a concrete terminating product of racialized interactions, but also it was process oriented:

Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life...As a social contact initiates interaction, assimilation is its final perfect product.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Pierre Saint-Arnaud, *African American Pioneers of Sociology: A Critical History*, trans. Peter Feldstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 52.

<sup>51</sup> Robert E. Park, “Negro Home Life and Standards of Living,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (1913): 147-163.

<sup>52</sup> Robert E. Park, “Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular References to the Negro,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 19 (1914): 606-623.

<sup>53</sup> Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), 735-737.

Park maintained that it is the task of sociology as a science to empirically analyze such culminating societal processes, which capture various human interactions occurring within and across racial lines. Park's processual approach to sociology combined with his theoretical contributions to race relations served as attractants to several early Negro sociologists, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, and Horace Cayton. These sociologists, in their wider examination of various predicates of Negro communities, would not only continue to expand the theoretical framework of the Chicago School, but also they would make vital contributions to the social examination of Negro life in general and Negro religion in particular.

Charles S. Johnson, the first Negro student of Robert Park, examined Negro religion within an overarching social analysis of Negro life, which included social dimensions of institutionalized racism, economics, education, and urbanization. His sociological approach of combining qualitative descriptions with quantitative methods led to the formulation of social theories that placed great emphasis on the function of Negro religion, a term he used interchangeably with "church."<sup>54</sup> For example, Johnson proposed a simultaneous origination between Negro religion and functionality within the historical context of slavery. "The Negro," he maintained, "developed in slavery a religious tradition that not only made life tolerable...but [also it] imposed some sort of customary constraint upon his intimate personal and family life."<sup>55</sup> In this sense, religion from its inception played many roles. It provided a space for toleration and emotional release. In addition, it exerted social control over the individual and collective lives of

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<sup>54</sup> Basically, he did not make a distinction between Negro "religion" and "church." In this way, Christianity was the religion of Negroes in Johnson's analysis.

<sup>55</sup> Charles S. Johnson, "Statement of Charles S. Johnson," *American Sociological Review* 7 (1942): 164.

slaves. Moving beyond the historical ethos of slavery, Johnson highlighted the ways in which the institutionalized form of this religious tradition as expressed in the Negro Church continued to serve as an instrument of social order and control, especially in the South. For example, after interviewing over six hundred residents of Macon County, Alabama and observing multiple ecclesiastical functions, Johnson concluded that the Negro Church still functioned as the primary institution whose function was to exert social control over the Negro community.<sup>56</sup> The Negro Church, in his words, was “the medium for the exchange of ideas, making and maintaining friendships, community co-operation, collective striving, and group competition.”<sup>57</sup> The church acted as a conduit of social control. Therefore, with his employment of qualitative techniques, Johnson traced a historical compression of Negro religion from a dualistic mode of functionality to a monolithic function of societal “constraint.” This ecclesiastical restriction for Johnson, although it served a particular need within a specific historical frame, represented a hindrance to the cultural progression of the Negro race. In a “Statement by Charles S. Johnson” he examined how urbanization counteracted these hindrances to cultural elevation. The movement of Negroes into Southern and Northern cities, according to Johnson, would provide essential “cultural changes” and multiple outlets of socialization—including but not limited to economic enterprises and civic associations—needed in order to “escape the restraints” of Negro churches.<sup>58</sup> He theorized that urbanization would decrease the degree of social control exerted by the Negro church. To

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<sup>56</sup> Charles S. Johnson, “Religion and the Church,” in *Shadow of the Plantation* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 150-179.

<sup>57</sup> Charles S. Johnson, “The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot,” Chicago Commission Report on Race Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 142-143.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, “Statement,” 164.

this end, the interrelatedness between historical development, cultural assimilation via urbanization, and functionality served as the theoretical markers of Johnson's social examination of Negro religion.

Another sociologist of the Chicago School who contributed to the sociological study of both Negro life and religion within urban cities was E. Franklin Frazier. A brief summation of Frazier's theoretical framework of sociology is vital in order to understand his specific sociological approach to religion. Frazier utilized empirical methods to construct social scientific theories to examine modes of societal interaction. At the heart of this sociological stance were human interactions, particularly those occurring among Negroes in Northern urban cities. Sociology for Frazier involved examining the ways in which these human interactions formed corresponding social systems. Each social system represented a "collective existence," a social aggregation responsible for constructing various social "institutions and other structured forms of behavior."<sup>59</sup> Frazier in this sense followed his advisor Robert Park in that he was interested in examining *processes* involved in this relational mode of building social systems. Unlike Park, however, he frowned on positing this collective existence as one characterized by homogeneity and maintained approaching it as such was theoretically unfruitful. Social examinations of a Negro community must not, in the words of Frazier, "regard it as a homogeneous group, [but] the Negro population [should be] broken up in so far as it is possible to get objective indices to the different sections of the population."<sup>60</sup> His social treatment of the Negro community as one characterized by heterogeneity positioned him closer to the

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<sup>59</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, "Theoretical Structure of Sociology and Sociological Research," *The British Journal of Sociology* 4 (1953): 293.

<sup>60</sup> "The Negro Community, A Cultural Phenomenon," *Social Forces* 7 (1929): 419.

methodological footsteps of Ernest W. Burgess. Similar to Burgess' concentric zone theory, Frazier emphasized breaking large social systems into smaller components in order to emphasize social stratification. In *The Negro Family in Chicago*, for example, he employed multiple forms of statistics and indicators such as socioeconomic class and education in his social exploration of families in Chicago to emphasize the degree of heterogeneity existing among these familial groups. With this he argued that the Negro community was not a singular unit but one marked by varying degrees of differences. These variations for Frazier were produced by "processes of disorganization and reorganization" occurring within the structural dynamic of the Negro family in general and other social systems composing the Negro community in general.<sup>61</sup> The identification of these processes of disorganization/reorganization became the primary framework Frazier used to examine various dimensions of Negro life, including Negro religion.<sup>62</sup>

Although Frazier gave credence to the multiple forms of religions that existed in Negro communities,<sup>63</sup> his sociological exploration of Negro religion was mainly restricted to the Negro Church. One of his most comprehensive social investigations of the ecclesiastical lives of Negroes can be found in a text entitled, *The Negro Church in America*. In this work, Frazier argued that the "religious life of the Negro in the United States can only be understood in terms of the social organization and social disorganization of Negro life."<sup>64</sup> Therefore, an examination of Negro religiosity involved exploring the various ways in which societal processes impacted it. Much like his

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<sup>61</sup> Saint-Arnaud, *African American Pioneers of Sociology*, 212.

<sup>62</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken, 1974).

<sup>63</sup> Southern rural "primitive" religions and "metaphysical" religions represent two non-Christian religions he denotes as being practiced by Negroes. See "The Negro Community, A Cultural Phenomenon," 419.

<sup>64</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 8.

predecessor, Du Bois, Frazier emphasized the importance of historical relevance, thus, he locates this parallelism between religiosity and social processes within distinct historical moments occurring within the lives of Negroes in the United States. His investigation initiated with an illustration of how slavery and the plantation system ravaged social cohesiveness among enslaved Africans, followed by how the introduction of Christianity recaptured this lost solidarity. From the onset, Frazier moved the integrative function of the Negro Church to the forefront of his analysis. He went on to illustrate how the Negro Church, mainly through its institutionalization, served as an agent of reorganization, countering elements of disorganization as expressed in familial separation and economic instability occurring after the Civil War and during migration. Again, the Negro Church, as a social institution, organized the disorganized lives of Negroes in the United States. Although Frazier acknowledged the value of the social functioning of the Negro Church, he argued this “role in social organization has been due to the restricted participation of Negroes in American society.”<sup>65</sup> He asserted that increased participation of Negroes in mainstream America, especially in secular institutions, would decrease the necessity of the Negro Church to serve as the primary means of social ordering for the Negro. Frazier, much like Johnson, highlighted the important role secularization would play in the religious lives of Negroes in the United States.<sup>66</sup>

The Chicago School, in addition to cultivating early African American sociologists who made profound contributions to the sociology of religion, birthed one of the most comprehensive social surveys of Negro life since Du Bois’ *The Philadelphia Negro*. The *Black Metropolis*, co-authored by St. Clair Drake and Horace A. Cayton, a

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<sup>65</sup> Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*, 90.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 72-85.

social anthropologist and sociologist, respectively, utilized historical accounts, informal interviews, and direct observations to examine the lives of residents living in Bronzeville, a south-side community of Chicago that contained ninety-percent of the city's Negro population.<sup>67</sup> While the relationship between racism and the economic circumstances of Negroes of Chicago is captured in the first two sections, the third section explored major orientations that provided direction for Bronzeville's inhabitants. Religion, or, "praising God" was one of these guiding forces recognized by Drake and Cayton.<sup>68</sup> Religious plurality and functionality as well as the relationship between social stratification and religious commitment served as the core of their social analysis of religion within the Bronzeville community. The authors, unlike their Chicago colleagues' examination of Negro religion, did not just mention religious diversity in passing but emphasized this plurality existing among the Negro community of Bronzeville:

Nowhere else in the Midwest Metropolis could one find, within a stone's throw of one another, a Hebrew Baptist Church, a Baptized Believers' Holiness Church, a Universal Union Independent, a Church of Love and Faith, Spiritual, a Holy Mt. Zion Methodist Episcopal Church Independent, and a United Pentecostal Holiness Church. Or a cluster such as St. John's Christian Spiritual, Park Mission African Methodist Episcopal, Philadelphia Baptist, Little Rock Baptist, and the Aryan Full Gospel Mission, Spiritualist.<sup>69</sup>

The presence of such variety, according to the authors, served as a reflection of the different needs of the people found within the densely populated community. These spaces fulfilled the religious needs of the people. However, Drake and Cayton's analysis revealed that a majority of these ecclesiastical institutions, approximately 300 of the 500, were located among the lower socio-economic residents of Bronzeville illustrating a

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<sup>67</sup> St. Clair Drake and Horace A. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 385-395.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 381.

relationship between class division and religious participation. For instance, they reported that upper-class members' access to more social outlets made them more secularly oriented while lower-class residents turned to religion at a greater rate because it provided a temporary relief from the hardships of life in the Black Metropolis, an escapism similar to what Johnson identifies in his analysis of religion.<sup>70</sup> Like other functionalists, Drake and Cayton maintained that the Negro Churches' primary role was social control. Their analysis further revealed an inverse relationship between secularization/religious diversity and religious control. Mainly, churches would no longer serve as the sole source of social control due to the rise in other forms of socialization outlets, as expressed in religious cults and secular organizations, made available to the residents of Bronzeville.

*Expanding the Sociology of African American Religion: C. Eric Lincoln, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Sandra Barnes*

With the foundation laid by Du Bois and sociologists of the Chicago School, the social analysis of African American religion would undergo an expansion through the activities of sociologists of religion like C. Eric Lincoln, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Sandra L. Barnes.<sup>71</sup> The expansion of the Black Church's role beyond social order and the inclusion of non-Christian orientations as practiced by blacks were two major contributions of Lincoln to the social investigation of Black religion. Combining socio-historical

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<sup>70</sup> The authors illustrate this interrelationship between socioeconomic class, secular-based activities, and church-centered activities in a pyramid chart (Figure 31: The System of Social Classes in Bronzeville). See Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, 525.

<sup>71</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken, 1974); Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women...: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001); Sandra Barnes, "An Analysis of Black Church Usage of Black Liberation and Womanist Theologies," *Race, Class, and Gender* 13 (2007): 329-346.



approaches and empirical methods, Lincoln, in *The Black Church Since Frazier*, extended the functionality of the Black Church beyond social order/control through the utilization of identity politics. He argued that the Black Church, “as a self-conscious, self-assertive, and inner-directed institution,” represented a space in which Blackamericans articulated a sense of collective personhood as a counteractive measure against vicious acts of dehumanization occurring during the sixties.<sup>72</sup> The Black Church because it offered an opportunity to apprehend “somebodyness” functioned as a direct force of opposition against the caste system in the United States.<sup>73</sup> Lincoln, in this move, imbued the Black Church with a socio-political function, a stance that was very different than Frazier and Johnson, both conceiving of Negro church’s function as characterized by the social ordering of “Negroes” for the purposes of assimilation.

Lincoln, in addition to politicizing the Black Church’s functionality, utilized a sociological method that combined historical sketches, statistical analysis, surveys, and interviews in order to present the Black Church as a complex social institution. Such a combined approach allowed Lincoln to explore this complexity through the identification of multiple predicates existing within the Black Church. These three characteristics are explored in *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, a massive social analysis of black churches co-authored with Lawrence Mamiya. First, they maintained that the Black Church was a concrete manifestation of experiential encounters between African Americans and God occurring within various historical contexts. Due to the

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<sup>72</sup> Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier*, 109.

<sup>73</sup> “Somebodyness” is a term coined by Martin Luther King, Jr. He defined this term as a sense of self-respect that all members of humanity deserved. See “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 93.

variation inherent with both experience and historical occurrence, the Black Church for Lincoln and Mamiya possessed a degree of flexibility. Secondly, they asserted that the Black Church embodied admixture forms, which symbolized interplays between the sacred and secular elements. One such form was music. For example, both maintained that “music in the Black Church” was representative of a creative tension in that black churches were ingeniously “incorporating [secular] musical styles like jazz and blues into worship settings.” Lastly, Lincoln and Mamiya posited the Black Church as a social “institution that [is] involved in a constant series of dialectical tensions.” Each saw these tensions as being dependent upon socio-historical changes; therefore, the Church’s gravitation towards any one pole was subject to change. Also, these constant alterations could also be captured with a single historical moment. For example, Lincoln and Mamiya utilized the Black Church’s political involvement in the Civil Rights movement via a compilation of Gallup surveys to illustrate this “doubleness” as expressed in the bipolarity between “resistance verses accommodation,” which some black churches advocated active participation in civil rights demonstrations while others chose to remain ambiguous to any direct form of political involvement, respectively.

Not only did Lincoln contribute greatly to the sociology of black churches, but also he moved social analysis beyond these hedges of Christianity to encompass non-Christian religions practiced by blacks, mainly Islam. One of the earliest comprehensive social examinations of Americanized Islam can be found in his text, *The Black Muslims in America*. In this text, Lincoln employed qualitative methods like interviews, surveys, and direct observations to outline the structural and doctrinal framework of “Black

Muslims,” a term he coined to described those blacks who followed Elijah Muhammad.<sup>74</sup> The myth of Yakub, dietary restrictions, prescribed gender roles, prayer requirements, and economic independence, for example, were primary elements captured in his presentation of the Black Muslims’ doctrinal/structural framework. In addition, Lincoln offered reasons why members were attracted to the movement. Group cohesiveness, universal welcoming of all African Americans, and anti-Christian sentiments, according to Lincoln, were primary attractants for incoming members. In this way, the Black Muslim movement offered blacks an “alternative” religious form, an orientation other than Christianity.<sup>75</sup>

Lincoln expanded his sociological treatment of Black Muslims by interweaving the reasons why such a religious group would come into existence within black communities. Black Muslims for him represented one of the many outlets that blacks constructed to survive within specific historical dilemma like the Depression Era. For Lincoln, this movement was an external manifestation of the “several impulses of America’s black community...[grasping] for a creative and meaningful existence.”<sup>76</sup> Survival was assured through the group’s emphasis on economic independence as well as its commitment to physical health via dietary regulations and rejection of intoxicants. However, Lincoln extends survival to encompass identity. Identity as offered by Black Muslims involved a rejection of “Negro” identity. Members accepted a new identity, a

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<sup>74</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 20.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, xvi. This same sentiment of Islam as an alternative can also be seen in the last chapter, “The Nation of Islam: An Alternative Expression of Black Religion,” of *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 153-168.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, xvii. For Lincoln’s correlation of identity and color, see “Color and Group Identity in the United States,” 96 (1967): 527-541.

rendering of blacks as divinized, “original people” with a rich cultural legacy that initiates before the enslavement of Africans. Therefore, the Black Muslim movement, according to Lincoln, emblemized a “quest for a quality of survival consistent with its self-perceived identity.”<sup>77</sup> Survival entailed matters of physicality as well as a collective mode of selfhood. In this way, Lincoln utilized qualitative approaches not only to offer a schematic depiction of the structural framework of this group, but also he employed this sociological approach to propose a theoretical notion that posited the Black Muslim Movement as a materialization of “creative survival” within black communities.<sup>78</sup>

Like Lincoln, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, also makes vital contributions that would widen the sociology of African American religion. The social analysis of black women experiences in the United States affords Gilkes the ability to both problematize interpretative categorizations of traditional sociology and examine under-explored subject matter within sociological investigations. The traditional way of analyzing social variable as separate entities, according to Gilkes, does not offer methods robust enough to view social realities that involve interrelated variables. In other words, she maintains, “Sociological inquiry has not adopted a language or a perspective adequate to explain fully the position and experiences of color in the United States.”<sup>79</sup> These experiences of color combined with multiple social constructs like race, class, and gender that do not operate independently of each other but intersect. Embodied within the lived experiences

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<sup>77</sup> Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, xxii.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “A Case Study: Race-Ethnicity, Class, and African American Women: Exploring the Community Connection,” in *Revolutions in Knowledge: Feminism in the Social Sciences*, eds. Sue Rosenberg Zalk and Janice Gordon-Kelter (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 63-78.

of black women lies a concrete manifestation of this “intersectionality.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, a social analysis of black women’s experiences must adopt an interpretative method robust enough to view these interrelated social variables. Gilkes proposes the use of a “womanist idea” to handle this sociological task.<sup>81</sup> “The womanist idea,” Gilkes maintains, “is a way of reading and hearing.”<sup>82</sup> Both written source material and oral histories are considered invaluable to scholars utilizing this interpretative approach. Furthermore, in the words of Gilkes, “the idea provides for integrating protest history and ethical construction in exploring the structuring and re-structuring of community over time. The idea assumes women’s agency and points to the conscious action of African American women in shaping and re-shaping community institutions as their work.”<sup>83</sup> In this way, the womanist idea not only moves the agency of African American women to the forefront of social inquiry, but it also illustrates how these women, through a collective effort, molded and remodeled social institutions within African American communities in particular and the United States in general. Such an interpretative lens, according to Gilkes, particularly acknowledges the importance of African American women as valued subjects of study, moving their experiences beyond social analysis that counts them as pathological sources. Generally, the womanist idea challenges social scientists to create new modes of examination that focuses on the intersection of social

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<sup>80</sup> A term utilized by Patricia Hill Collins to describe the intersection of multiple forms of oppression, specifically race and class, within the lives of African America women. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “Womanist Ideals and the Sociological Imagination,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 8 (1992): 148-149.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 151.

categories of multidimensionality found operating in many societal groups within the United States.<sup>84</sup>

Gilkes combines the womanist idea with traditional qualitative sociological methods, mainly in the form of interviews and observations, to explore social realms of African American women as articulated in the Black Church and their surrounding communities. Gilkes illustrates how African American women carved and continue to carve out “alternative structures of authority” in order to apprehend a sense of autonomy in varying ecclesiastical “context[s] of structural subordination.”<sup>85</sup> For example, in her social analysis of the Sanctified Church, Gilkes highlights how female “Saints,”<sup>86</sup> through such auxiliaries as the Women’s department, built churches, made significant financial contributions, and increased literacy rates among members. In this way, African American women stood as a collective in order to ensure the survival of the Sanctified Church. Also, Gilkes’ social analysis highlights how women employed both biblical feminism and cultural production within in the Black Church to articulate collective autonomy. The former represented a direct contestation against explicit forms of patriarchy within some black churches. Gilkes highlights how biblical feminists like Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth used scriptural references to “refute biblical arguments demanding their silence as public speakers.”<sup>87</sup> Concerning the latter, cultural production, she analyzes a play written by Nannie Helen Burroughs entitled, “The Slabtown District Convention”. In treating this cultural product as a case study, Gilkes

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<sup>84</sup> Gilkes, *If It Wasn’t For the Women*, 143.

<sup>85</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “Together and in Harness: Women’s Traditions in the Sanctified Church,” *Signs* 10 (1985): 689 and 698.

<sup>86</sup> A designated term used by Sanctified Churches to distinguish members of these groups from other African American Christians. See Gilkes, “Together and in Harness,” 679.

<sup>87</sup> Gilkes, *If It Wasn’t For the Women*, 109.

illustrates how Burroughs' play served as a cultural projector that publicly displayed the "political and cultural tensions within black communities" in general and black churches in particular. To this end, Burroughs and other African American women were able to creatively offer a critique of secular/sacred social systems.<sup>88</sup> Whether through the development of organizations or the creation of cultural forms of critique, Gilkes' social study of the lives of African American women represented a simultaneous inquiry into both the Black Church and community, two worlds whose survival was insured by the collective stance of these same women.

Like the functionalists preceding her, Gilkes, in addition to her social analysis of African American women, weighs in on the function of the Black Church as a social institution, but unlike her predecessors, she extends this functionality by incorporating a psychical component.<sup>89</sup> Namely, some African American religious activities, she argues, serve as inhibitors of certain psychiatric disruptions, which results in a lower rate of mental illness in African American populations in the United States.<sup>90</sup> The Black Church for Gilkes acts as both a social institution responsible for organizing the community and a "true asylum"—"an inviolable place of refuge and protection."<sup>91</sup> The Black Church as an asylum, according to her, provides four specific therapeutic functions for its members. First, religious practices like praying, testifying, and singing are therapeutic because they afford members an outlet in which to articulate suffering. These outlets, Gilkes states, "Stimulate collective catharsis in such a way that the needs of individuals to release

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<sup>88</sup> Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women*, 149.

<sup>89</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "The Black Church as a Therapeutic Community: Suggested Areas For Research Into the Black Religious Experience," 8 (1980): 29-44.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

tension or distressful emotion are met.”<sup>92</sup> Release of such tensions she correlates to emotional purging occurring in psychical therapeutic sessions. Identifying causes associated with the initiation of particular sufferings serve as the second therapeutic task of the Black Church. Closely related to the first function, providing activities in which congregants may “act out” represent the third cathartic function of the Black Church. For example, Gilkes maintains that Sunday morning services in *some* churches, especially “those characterized by extreme emotionalism,” provide “a non-punitive setting which blacks are able to act-out and work through whatever happens to be troubling them.”<sup>93</sup> Again, the Black Church as “asylum” offers affective catharsis. Lastly, the Black Church, according to Gilkes, represents a space of validation for many African Americans. Through the formation of accountability in-groups within the church setting, members receive positive self-images that are counteractive against the negative stereotypes placed upon them by mainstream society. To this end, Gilkes proposes that all four of these therapeutic functions as captured in religious activities occurring within black churches “act as a support to black sanity.”<sup>94</sup>

While both Gilkes and Lincoln incorporate quantitative methods, Sandra L. Barnes, much like Du Bois’ early approach to religion, returns to the utilization of scientific method and rigorous statistical analysis to investigate the contemporary Black Church. Found at the heart of Barnes’ sociological exploration of black churches is the establishment of inter-related correlations between intra-ecclesiastical predicates and

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<sup>92</sup> Gilkes, “The Black Church as a Therapeutic Community,” 33.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 38. Gilkes discusses how African Americans who attended churches that were not characterized by emotionalism, including her Catholic friend she took to a Baptist church (see note 14), would quite often find “shoutin churches” unsettling.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 42.



external societal attributes. Specifically, three thematic correlations characterize her body of work on the Black Church. Correlating the Black Church's socio-political involvement with "gender inclusivity" as found in this same space represents Barnes' first thematic correlation.<sup>95</sup> Utilizing data taken from national/local surveys to establish bivariate correlations and regressions, Barnes concludes that there is no direct relationship between social activism of churches and their acceptance of female clergy. For instance, while the Church of God in Christ possessed an incredibly high support rate, approximately ninety percent, of the church's role in discussing socio-political issues, their approval of female pastors is only fifty percent.<sup>96</sup> Although about seventy-three percent of black churches participating in the surveys approved of female pastors, the continuing presence of opposition to female clergy, especially in the COGIC and independent Baptist denominations, leads Barnes to conclude "that church involvement in social activism does not always translate into support for other issues typically considered social problems."<sup>97</sup> Thus, other social ills like racism and classism in some ecclesiastical settings may be assigned a higher priority value over an issue of like gender marginalization.

Correspondence between various "cultural components" of the Black Church and social action is the second thematic correlation expressed in Barnes' social analysis of the

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<sup>95</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, "Whosoever Will Let *Her* Come: Social Activism and Gender Inclusivity in the Black Church," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (2006): 371.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 377.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 381.

Black Church.<sup>98</sup> Specifically, she theorizes that cultural elements, especially those imbued with a socio-political message, as expressed in black churches serve as catalysts in the formation of community action.<sup>99</sup> Again, utilizing statistical models like logistic regression to analyze national church profile data provided by the Faith Factor 2000 Project,<sup>100</sup> Barnes' hypothesis is partly validated. While each of her independent variables i.e. cultural components indicated community activity across various denominations, the highest percentages of yield did not occur with politically-oriented cultural forms as manifested in justice, racial, and liberation sermons. Sermons such as those previously stated prompted a specified type of participation in that social activity was restricted to socio-political activity. However, individual and communal forms of prayer resulted in the highest yield of community involvement, which is commonly expressed in the establishment of food banks, substance abuse programs, and programs for youth. The ability of prayer to propagate social involvement, Barnes concludes, "suggests the need to explore the possible multi-dimensional nature of prayer as both a tool of other-worldly communication and subsequent temporal activity."<sup>101</sup> In this sense, Barnes' analysis highlights areas within the sociology of African American religion that demands increased scholarly attention.

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<sup>98</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, "Black Culture and Community Action," *Social Forces* 84 (2005): 972. She recognizes "prayer, singing, preaching, scripture, and collective worship" as primary cultural tools utilized in the Black Church.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 982. For Barnes sermons that incorporate liberative and racial messages would yield a higher percentage of social activity within the particular church space.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 976-977. The Interdenominational Theological Center and the Lily Foundation teamed up with the purpose of creating a national database of black churches, 1,863 churches across seven denominations. This collaboration is known as the Faith Factor 2000 Project.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 986.

The most recent work by Barnes captures a final thematic correlation, the relationship between cultural production and religion.<sup>102</sup> She specifically explores the relationship between the utilization of gospel rap within black church services and those indicators that promote such incorporation. Appropriating Lincoln and Mamiya's priestly/prophetic dialectic, Barnes maintains that some churches are predominantly characterized by priestly predicates while others are framed by prophetic predicates. According to her, the dominant trait, priestly or prophetic, determines whether or not gospel music would be incorporated into the worship framework of black churches. With the parameters set, she argues that "congregations with more priestly characteristics will be more or less likely to use gospel rap music than churches considered more prophetic in nature."<sup>103</sup> As seen in the previous two correlations, she employs statistical analysis to test this specific hypothesis. Although her data analysis yields an incorporation of gospel rap across several denominations—highest percentage found among African Methodist Episcopal churches—black churches that incorporate elements of socio-political into their structure are more willing to accept gospel rap as a viable form of worship. For Barnes these results signal the need for more scholarly research concerning the incorporation of secularly derived cultural forms like gospel hip hop into the sacred realms of the Black Church. More importantly, Barnes suggests that the incorporation of various quantitative methods, as shown in her three thematic correlations, creates "more robust" sociological theories used to explore the contemporary Black Church.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, "Religion and Rap Music: An Analysis of Black Church Usage," *Review of Religious Research* 49 (2008): 319-338.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 325.

<sup>104</sup> Barnes, "Black Culture and Community Action," 987.

### **The Du Boisian Frame and the Development of a Storyline of Functionality**

A historical mapping of the sociology of African American religion as presented in the previous section not only illustrates the importance sociology has played and still plays in the examination of African American religion, but this tracing also posits Du Bois as a cornerstone in the initiation of this same interpretative discourse. He is awarded such a mark not solely based upon his contributions to the enterprise through his extensive publications on religion. But, more importantly, Du Bois maintains such a position because of his construction and employment of a unique sociological framework called the *Du Boisian frame* in which he uses to examine religion. This interpretative frame conjoins a general conception of social theory, in Du Bois's case, social action, with particular methodological forms utilized during the social analysis to advance a theoretical notion about the investigative topic, in this case, African American religion. The following equation denotes a linear characterization of this Du Boisian frame and its resultant theory of religion:

$$(S + M) = TR$$

where (S+M) is the Du Boisian frame, with S representing the general social theory and M representing the specific type(s) sociological method(s) applied, while TR is the theory of religion proposed as a result of the completed social analysis. Hence, Du Bois' interpretative frame becomes the "core frame," or, the central mode of framing that is adopted by following sociologists and integrated into their respective social investigations of African American religion. See Table 1.

**Table 1: Major Social Examinations of African American Religion**

Sociologist	Social Theory (S)	Method (M)	Resulting Theory of Religion (TR)
W.E.B. DuBois	Society “as” human (re)actions to societal conditions	Social Study: Quantitative—including details surveys, census reports, and statistical analysis Qualitative—interviews and direct observations General Survey: historical account of investigative subject(s)	Negro Church is the “epicenter” of social life and organizer of all actions and behaviors within the Negro community
Charles Johnson	Society “as” human interactions	Ethnography—interviews and non-participant observations Historical account of investigative subject(s)	Negro Church is an outlet of emotional release, provides social control, and serves as a cultural constraint
E. Franklin Frazier	Society “as” social systems characterized by societal processes of (dis)organization and stratification	Detailed statistical analysis, census reports, social case records, and interviews Historical account of investigative subject(s)	Negro religion is the primary source of social organization within Negro communities
Horace Cayton St. Clair Drake (anthropologist)	Society “as” stratified human interactions	Mixed Method-social statistics, interviews, and observations Historical account of investigative subject(s)	Religion represents only one of the several orientations of Negro life Social control via religion is dependent upon social status
C. Eric Lincoln	Society “as” human dynamic interactions characterized by social distance and alterations	Combined Approach – quan/qual methods Historical account of investigative subject(s)	Religion cultivates social identity, resistance, and survival in

			relation to social oppression Religion entails a grappling with life's meaning
Cheryl Gilkes	Society “as” composed of multiple intersecting social variables	Interviews, participant observation, and case studies analysis Historical account of investigative subject(s)	Religion is an outlet for communal agency and survival in the face of multidimensional modes of societal oppression Religion serves as an outlet for emotional and mental therapy
Sandra Barnes	Society “as” a combination of structural dynamics and human agency	Experimental Method—including detailed statistical correlations	Religion serves as a potential outlet for social and personal agency

**Table 1.** Summary of Social Theories of African American Religion.

As the above table indicates, each theorist incorporates Du Bois’ core sociological frame, (S+M), in that they link their general social theory (S) to specific methodological approaches (M), whether in the form of quantitative or qualitative methods, to articulate a specific interpretation of African American religion. While these social scientists incorporate the Du Boisian core frame, they do so in different ways. For instance, Frazier combines a social theory of society as representing systems guided by societal processes with statistical analysis to render an interpretation about African American religion. In comparison, an interpretative framework that adjoins an intersectionality view of society with qualitative methods like interviewing and case studies analysis guides Gilkes’ examination of African American religion. Frazier and Gilkes’ analysis of African

American religion illustrate the utilization of the Du Boisian central frame, (S+M). Furthermore, both cases also reveal a re-framing of this original frame, however.<sup>105</sup> For instance, while Du Bois' conception of society privileged human activity, Frazier and Gilkes' social theory centered on social processes and intersectionality of social variables, respectively. Thus, while re-framing ensures the replication of a core sociological approach, (S+M), it is not done at the expense of sacrificing the social theorist unique way of conjoining various general social theories and methods that are available for usage in the social analysis of African American religion.

Not only does the utilization of a core (re)frame highlights variety existing with social theory/method unification, but also core (re)framing as an interpretative process directly results in the articulation of specified theories of African American religion. A clear demonstration of this duality of (re)framing can be seen in Table 1 where the first two columns captures the social theory (S) and methodology (M) and the last column of the figure contains the resultant theories premised upon the theorist's conjoining of (S+M). These theories capture a variety of views concerning African American religion. For example, Du Bois' analysis of the Negro Church, which involved his view of society as human actions combined with an empirical approach, led him to posit a theoretical view of this social institution as the "epicenter" responsible for the socialization of Negroes. In short, the Negro Church organized Negro activities. However, Lincoln's use of conflict theory combined with an admixture of quantitative/qualitative methods in his analysis of both the Black Church and Black Muslims posits African American religion

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<sup>105</sup> Luiz Carlos Baptista, "Framing and Cognition," in *Goffman's Legacy*, ed. A. Javier Treviño (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 208.

as a cultivator of “social identity, resistance, and survival” in a societal context of oppression, mainly that of racism.

Despite theoretical variety among sociologists listed in Table 1, the application of the Du Boisian frame in their social examination of African American religion brings to the forefront a common thread that connects each of their resultant sociological theories concerning African American religion. Each privileges the integrative function of African American religion. Specifically, the use of the Du Boisian frame posits African American religion as a social *part* whose primary function involves maintenance of the African American community as a *whole*.<sup>106</sup> In this sense African American religion as a catalyst of social integration becomes the dominant “storyline”—the primary schema present in the multiple social interpretations of African American religion.<sup>107</sup> Whether viewed as a

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<sup>106</sup> Harold Dean Trulear, “A Critique of Functionalism: Toward a More Holistic Sociology of Afro-American Religion,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 42 (1985): 41.

<sup>107</sup> Cheryl Townsend Gilkes in her social analyses of African American religion takes into consideration individual contribution (via case studies) to the religious enterprise under discussion. For example, in *If It Wasn't For The Women*, Gilkes explores how Nannie Helen Burroughs utilizes cultural production to offer critiques of “various dimensions of African American religious culture and consciousness during the early twentieth century.” Although Gilkes treats Burroughs as an “individual” case study, her contributions are not valued in and of themselves but for what they offered the larger community. “Exploring Nannie Helen Burrough’s musical comedy,” Gilkes maintains, “allows us to reach back before the civil rights movement to point to the importance of women’s leadership and self-conscious models they themselves offered to the *community* [emphasis added].” (157) Furthermore, Gilkes proposes that such focus as results in the revealing of how Burrough’s “style of leadership and model of change [served as a] product of black women’s agency and assertive investment in the ideological and practical transformation of their *total community* [emphasis added].” (157) In this way, while Gilkes considers the *individual* contributions of Burrough, these same experiences are in the end subsumed by the movement of this individual agency toward the assertion and maintenance of a more *collective* notion of African American women’s agency. The individual is subsumed by the collective purpose forward by Gilkes. To this end, the individual serves primarily as a means to an end. And, this end, in the words of Gilkes, “is the total community.” (157) See “Sisters Who Can Lift a Community,” in *If It Wasn't For The Women*, 142-157.



means of social organization; as a mode of creating outlets for communal agency; or as a way of cultivating resistance against societal oppression in order to ensure communal survival, the integrative function of African American religion remains the focal point of the social investigations of Du Bois, Johnson, Frazier, Cayton/Drake, Lincoln, Gilkes, and Barnes. African American religion, then, according to this functionalist narrative, is posited as either “a defense mechanism” against societal oppressions or a “human construct” solely concerned with social adaptation, solidarity, and cohesiveness.<sup>108</sup> To this end, the primary storyline constructed by the application of Du Boisian sociological framing reduces African American religion to social functions.

### **In-framing the “Individual”: Religious Functionality and Self-Interpretations**

This privileging of integrative function results in the marginalization of the various ways that African American religion functions for the individual. In order to bring these subordinated elements into focus, the individual must be seen as a viable initiating point in sociological explorations of African American religion. The individual here being defined as a societal member who possesses the desire for unification with a social group and separation from the societal demand of this same social group. If the individual as stated serves as the starting point of a social analysis of African American religion, then can such an analysis still be considered sociological discourse? Sociologist Erving Goffman, in his exploration of how individuals organize everyday experience, offers an answer to this question. He states, “I am not addressing the structure of social life but the

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<sup>108</sup> Talbert O. Shaw, “Religion and Afro-Americans: A Propaedeutic,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 32 (1975): 68.

structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives.”<sup>109</sup> Here Goffman not only offers two plausible initiating points of a social analysis, the social structure and the individual, but he also, emphasizes how an individual can be examined without rupturing connectivity to a social ethos. To this end, with the individual as focal point, functionality of African American religion can be expanded to include individual experiences without negating the interpretative commitment to social integration and maintenance of collective solidarity as shown in traditional sociological explorations of African American religion.

In order to widen the functionality of religion in general and African American religion in particular, the relationship between the individual, religion, and society must be reconsidered. Society is formed by diverse human interactions, and religion is a societal form or context that offers concrete manifestations of such interactions. Societal interactions are not spontaneous but are driven by “sociological duality,” a societal member’s desire for unification with a group verses an equally as intensive counteractive longing to disintegrate from the societal demand of this same social group.<sup>110</sup> Thus, societal interactions are propagated by the individual’s dualistic desire for (dis)integration. Religion, as a societal form containing various modes of human interaction, then, acts as a projection site where these dual antagonistic tendencies are played out. Through its multifarious doctrinal constructs and ritualistic activities, religion:

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<sup>109</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 13.

<sup>110</sup> Georg Simmel, “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality,” in *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 263.

[...] satisfies the demand for social adaptation; it leads the individual upon the road which all travel, it furnishes a general condition, which resolves the conduct of every individual into a mere example. At the same time it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency towards dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast...<sup>111</sup>

Thus, religion serves as a societal context in which the individual negotiates dual desires of solidarity and differentiation. Religion affords a social context in which the individual can articulate a conception of collective identity through the establishment of a connection with a social group through the process of social integration. Such social functioning, as expressed in the previous historical mapping of social examinations of African American religion, aids in the maturation, survival, and agency of the established social group(s). For example, C. Eric Lincoln, in his social analysis of black Muslims, offers an example of the role religion plays in the articulation of a collective form of identity:

Their [black Muslims] acceptance and assimilation into the group is so complete that their personal identity *is* the corporate image. Their confidence born of the strength and unity of the movement, which can perform miracles of accomplishment beyond the reach of any individual. Most important, they are no longer alone...And as long as the movement lives, the true believers cannot really die, for their life is in the corporate identity.<sup>112</sup>

Lincoln here illustrates how religion, particularly the Nation of Islam, serves an outlet in which the individual's desire for group solidarity is satisfied. The individual is able to express a notion of identity based upon *complete* "assimilation into the group." What happens to personal agency in this religious ethos? The personal identity is subsumed by the collective identity. The strength of the movement lies in such merging of identities in that the "corporate identity" of Black Muslims allows for the attainment of goals lying

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<sup>111</sup> Georg Simmel, "Fashion," in *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 296.

<sup>112</sup> Lincoln, *Black Muslims in America*, 97.

outside the “reach of any individual.” Lincoln provides an example of how religion functions in the satisfaction of the individual’s desire to form bonds with a group. The function of religion, however, is not restricted to collective purposes. Religion offers a contextual space in which the individual’s desire to separate from this same group in order to articulate a unique personal identity is manifested. Besides expanding religious functionality beyond the dominant storyline of social solidarity currently found in the sociology of African American religion, the placement of individual’s negotiation of social duality at the center of a social analysis, establishes and brings into focus an interpretation of African American religion that explores a correlation between religious functionality and various modes of self-interpretation—specific views of oneself resulting from the individual desire to ascertain group membership and personal difference.

The utilization of the Du Boisian core frame has resulted in the formulation of vital social theories concerning the integrative function of African American religion. However, in order to capture how religion functions in the religious experience of an individual, specifically how religion aids in the articulation various expressions of self, a methodological shift in sociological analyses of African American religion is required. Such a shift must be robust enough to examine both religion and self-interpretations as dynamical, continuously fluctuating. The purpose of the next chapter, then, is to construct an interpretative framework capable of exploring multiple notions of self that individuals display in African American religion.

## Chapter 2

### Creating “Selves”: Employing a Theory of Self and Creativity to Extend African American Religion Functionality

I seem to see a way of elucidating the inner meaning and significance of that race problem by explaining it in terms of the one human life that I know best.<sup>113</sup>

In the folds of this European civilization I was born and shall die, imprisoned, conditioned, depressed, exalted and inspired. Integrally a part of it and yet, much more significant, one of its rejected parts; one who expressed in life and action and made vocal to many, a single whirlpool of social entanglement and inner psychological paradox, which always seem to me more significant for the meaning of the world today than other similar and related problems.<sup>114</sup>

The previous chapter ends calling for a methodological shift. Specifically, a shift from an interpretative approach that privileges how African American religion functions for the collective to a sociological approach, which focuses on the variety of ways that African religion functions for the individual. Although Du Bois’ social investigations of African American religion served as a cornerstone in the privileging of the former, these opening excerpts, both from his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn*, explicitly illustrate his eventual methodological shifting to the latter. This move signals a shift from the exclusive application of an empirically based sociology that privileges the collective experiences of African Americans to one characterized by personalized experiences, mainly those of his own. Du Bois recognizes himself as an individual who is complex, “a single whirlpool of social entanglement and inner psychological paradox.” It is this recognition of the individual as both a viable focal point of analysis and as an embodiment of social and

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<sup>113</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxxiii.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 1.

psychological properties that serves as a means in which to offer an interpretative approach to African American religion that includes but moves beyond a commitment to integrative function.

The primary goal of this chapter is to offer such an approach, particularly a social psychological framework robust enough to hold both notions of collectivity and individuality in tension during a social analysis of African American religion. This social psychological approach is characterized by two distinct elements. The first element involves the construction of a multidimensional model of self that is composed of three parts: personal self, collective self, and dynamical self. Self here being defined as a way in which an individual sees or defines him/herself.<sup>115</sup> The second element constituting this social psychological approach is the positing of religion as a “creative” medium. Through various modes of creativity—mainly that of intersubjective creativity and intrasubjective creativity—individuals utilize religious spaces as a means to express multiple forms of self-interpretations. With both of these elements taken together, the following argument is made: religion in general and African American religion in particular serve as viable outlets in which individuals utilize creativity to express multiple modes of self-interpretations.

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<sup>115</sup> Throughout the years, various thinkers have suggested a meaning for self. For C. G. Jung, self represented an archetype gained in the terminus step of individuation. See *The Undiscovered Self: The Dilemma of the Individual in Modern Society* (New York: NAL Trade, 2006); *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). William James presents self as divisible, unitive, subliminal, and manifested, see *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 167-188, 511, and 513. Along with these theorists, social psychologists have posited self as emotional, cognitive, motivational, and memorable. See, for example, Stanley B. Klein, “A Self to Remember: A Cognitive Neuropsychological Perspective on How Self Creates Memory and Memory Creates Self,” in *Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer (Philadelphia: Psychological Press, 2001), 25.

### **Push and Pull: Desire, Human Action, and Multiple Notions of the Self**

In order to discuss how individuals utilize religious spaces as creative medium in order to express multiple self-interpretations, the interconnectivity between desire, human action, and self must be explored. Sociological duality, as formally introduced in chapter one, expresses the dual desire of the individual to coalesce with a group and differentiate from this same collective. Desire is posited here as an internalized impulse, fundamental element predisposed to action, which seeks actualization through some type of external means. Hence, sociological duality not only explicitly highlights two primary desires found operating within the individual, but it also implicitly points to a multidimensional process involved in the actualization of these desires. Actualization of these desires requires the individual to move. This form of human action is produced in two ways. First, group solidarity and personal differentiation are posited as incentives, “external goals that [have] the capability to motivate behavior.”<sup>116</sup> Benefits associated with each incentivized state *pull* the individual into participatory action. For example, protection and survival are plausible gains associated with developing interpersonal relationships. Dianne Tice and Roy Baumeister list advantages associated with this type of collective survival and protection as played out among group members:

A person living alone in the primeval forest would have vastly reduced chances of survival as compared to someone who belonged to a group, because the group could share resources, divide labor, accumulate and transmit knowledge, fight together for mutual protection, care for each

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<sup>116</sup> Wayne Weiten, *Psychology: Themes and Variations, Eighth Edition* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 397.

other when sick, and do many other helpful things.<sup>117</sup>

Tice and Baumeister establish a direct relationship between numbers and survival percentage in that more members working together increases the chances of collective survival in contrast to survival rates of a single individual living in the same environmental context. In addition to survival, an apprehension of belongingness by way of the individual coalescing with a group yields an additional incentive expressed in the form of interpersonal reciprocity.<sup>118</sup> Interpersonal reciprocity occurs in an established relationship between two or more persons that involves the granting of incentives to participants in order to establish belongingness, which serves as the shared characteristic forefronting the collective representation. This form of reciprocity can be found primarily within exchange and communal relationships.<sup>119</sup> Unlike solidarity, personal differentiation offers the person both uniqueness and individuation as incentives to move. To this end, direct participation in either social cohesion or individual differentiation affords the individual an opportunity to articulate desires of integration through the

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<sup>117</sup> Dianne M. Tice and Roy F. Baumeister, "The Primacy of the Interpersonal Self," in *Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2001), 72.

<sup>118</sup> I am only utilizing the terminology here regarding interpersonal reciprocity; see Aaron L. Pincus and Emily B. Ansell, "Interpersonal Theory of Personality," in *Handbook of Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology, volume 5*, eds. Theodore Millon et al. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 215. Thus, the definition used in the sentence that follows is of my own construction.

<sup>119</sup> Margaret S. Clark and Judson Mills, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (1979): 12-24. Exchange relationships involve the swapping of equal benefits among participatory parties. In other words, for every beneficial action given there is an equal beneficial gain received. Communal relationships entail the satisfaction of a need without expecting some form of immediate gain in return. Both of these relationships offer the individual(s) reciprocated benefits through interpersonal means.



construction of interpersonal relationships or through the destruction of this same relational form, signaling a movement towards personal differentiation.

While the first method *pulls* the individual towards goals by offering external incentives, the second method utilizes an internal drive mechanism to accomplish the actualization of dual desires for (dis)integration. This latter mechanism works much like a drive theory:

[A] theor[y] of human motivation which explain why [individuals] do things, using the idea that [their] behavior is directed towards reducing some inner need. The need then sets up an internal tension and the desire to reduce this tension forms a pressure to act (the drive) which is only reduced when the need becomes satisfied.<sup>120</sup>

It is the internalized need of the person to articulate a dynamic mode of self containing multiple self-interpretations—how one views oneself—which serves as the primary driving force that *pushes* the individual towards either solidarity or separation. As such, there is a direct correlation between (dis)integration, self-interpretation, and actualization. The individual utilizes sought after ends of differentiation and solidarity as a means to satisfy dual desires for disintegration from a group and integration with this same group, respectively. These ends also serve as mediumistic forms employed by the individual to articulate two corresponding modes of self-interpretations known as the *personal* self and *collective* self.

### **The Personal Self: Defining Oneself Through Separation (Disintegration)**

The isolated self, private self, and the individual self represent the various terms utilized by social psychologists in their discourse on self as it relates to mental construction, ego

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<sup>120</sup> Philip Banyard and Nicky Hayes, *Psychology: Theory and Application* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1994), 360.

development, and positional primacy, respectively.<sup>121</sup> Each of these social psychological approaches has contributed to the expansion of literature on the structure and function of a personal notion of self. However, psychologists Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama in an article examining the role of culture in the construction of self offers a comprehensive definition of an independent and individualized notion of self. For them, self is defined as a “construaling of oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one’s own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, Markus and Kitayama’s notion of self is not dependent on the input of external elements in the form of mental, emotional, or physical acts but construction depends upon the personal/internal elements of these forms.

As with Markus and Kitayama’s independent construal of self, the *personal self* is premised upon the unique attributes of the individual. The personal self involves the individual using distinguishing personal qualities to construct a view or definition of him/herself. This form of defining oneself, then, is characterized by individuals constantly seeking “to perceive of themselves as having some differences and struggling with cultural and social forces that inhibit the expression and self-perception of [this]

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<sup>121</sup> For a discussion of these various social psychological approaches to self, see Paula M. Niedenthal and Denise R. Beike, “Interrelated and Isolated Self-Concepts,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 1 (1997): 106-128; Steven J. Breckler and Anthony G. Greenwald, “Motivational Facets of the Self,” in *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior*, eds. Richard M. Sorrentino and E. Tory Higgins (New York: Guilford Press, 1986), 145-164; Constantine Sedikides and Lowell Gaertner, “A Homecoming to the Individual Self: Emotional and Motivational Primacy,” in *Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer (Philadelphia: Psychological Press, 2001), 7-23.

<sup>122</sup> H. R. Markus and S. Kitayama, “Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 98 (1991): 226.

uniqueness.”<sup>123</sup> Therefore, this mode of self as expressed by the person both counteracts social conformity and forefronts predicates in such a way that the individual moves away from sharing collective identities with others. In short, the person is now able to individuate. Here “individuation is defined as a person’s subjective mapping of the social world, in which self is differentiated to a greater or lesser degree from the other social objects in the field.”<sup>124</sup> Individuation not only varies from person to person, but also it is a process that allows the individual to increase social distance through a state of differentiation, mainly from that of other people within a given social space. Thus, a direct correlation exists between this process of individuation i.e. separation from others and the individual’s construction of a view of self based upon personal and unique characteristics.

### **The Collective Self: Defining Oneself Through Unification (Integration)**

Contrary to the personal self, the *collective* self<sup>125</sup> is based on shared categorical membership. The individual in this way is seen “less as [an] individual person and more

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<sup>123</sup> C. R. Synder and Howard L. Fromkin, *Uniqueness: The Human Pursuit of Difference* (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), 198.

<sup>124</sup> Robert C. Ziller, “Individuation and Socialization: A Theory of Assimilation in Large Organizations,” *Human Relations* 17 (1964): 345.

<sup>125</sup> My use of the collective self is comprehensive in that it includes self-concepts formed in interpersonal relationships and intergroup associations. For details concerning social self as a result of interpersonal relationships, see J. Cheek, “Identity Orientations and Self-Interpretation,” in *Personality Psychology: Recent Trends and Emerging Directions*, eds. David Buss and Nancy Cantor (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989), 275-285. Examinations of social self definitions premised upon intergroup comparisons has received a considerable amount of attention in social psychology. See John C. Turner et al., “Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20 (1994): 454-463; Marilynn B. Brewer and Wendi Gardner, “Who Is This ‘We’: Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71 (1996): 83-93. For multi-dimensionality of collective identity, see, for example, Richard D. Ashmore et al., “An Organizing

as [an] interchangeable representative” of a group.<sup>126</sup> In other words, this form of self-interpretation maximizes assimilation in that common collective features take precedence over distinctive or personal predicates of the individual. The “I” or individual becomes easily interchangeable with “we” or the collective. This pronoun shift results from a process known as depersonalization. Self-categorization theorist like John C. Turner not only recognizes depersonalization as the primary catalyst in the formation of group solidarity, but also, he maintains that it causes a tangible “shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person.”<sup>127</sup> Therefore, self is depersonalized in such a way that the personal interpretation of self is replaced by that of collectivity. This shift brings to the forefront the direct correlation existing between a conception of self built upon shared categorical similarities and the act of depersonalization. Such a relationship minimizes the once distinguishable markers of the individual and maximizes a collective mode of self-definition.

Although an articulation of a collective notion of self subjects the individual to varying degrees of depersonalization, the collective self provides this same individual with a motivating incentive to coalesce with a group. The group provides the individual with a relational framework necessary in order to gain a sense of certainty. This “subjective certainty is tied to group membership and thus to the self-concept. Things that are certain [for the individual] is linked to the prototypical features of social groups

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Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality,” *Psychological Bulletin* 130 (2004): 80-114.

<sup>126</sup> Turner et al., “Self and Collective,” 455.

<sup>127</sup> John C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 50.

which [the person] identifies with...thus, certainty about attitudes, feelings, and behaviors” point to the obtainment of a certainty of a collective notion of self as exhibited by the individual.<sup>128</sup> Such a reduction of subjective uncertainties depends on the formulation of a self-definition by the individual that privileges shared group attributes or “we-ness.” Once again, this reduction serves as the incentive for the individual to exhibit a self-definition through means of shared category. Why is this so important? Well, there is a direct correlation between meaning making and subjectivity certainty. Individuals utilize relational frameworks or interpersonal relationships premised upon common similarities as a way to make bring about some consistency i.e. meaning in life that is full of inconsistencies. Therefore, membership has its privileges, and the individual foregoes a personalized sense of self in order to express a self-definition premised upon collectivity.

### **Competing “Selves”: Functional Antagonism Between the Personal Self and Collective Self**

Optimal distinctive theory and dialectical interaction theory are two theoretical categories that have been utilized to describe the relationship between the collective self and personal self as expressed by the individual. The former as presented by social identity theorist Marilynn B. Brewer highlights tension between these two modes of self-interpretation. For her this tension is alleviated only through the attainment of “optimal distinctiveness”—the establishment of equilibrium between an individual identifying

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<sup>128</sup> Michael A. Hogg and B.A. Mullin, “Joining Groups to Reduce Uncertainty: Subjective Uncertainty Reduction and Group Identification,” in *Social Identity and Social Cognition*, eds. Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 255.

with a group and differentiating from this same sort of collective bond.<sup>129</sup> The latter, or dialectical interaction theory, views the relationship between the collective self and personal self as one characterized not by tension but dialogue. In describing such an association between these modes of self, one theorist of this camp states, “It is a dialectic relationship in that there is continual, dynamic dialogue between the two in the course of which they make each other possible.”<sup>130</sup> Thus, there exist little inseparability between the collective self and personal self as used by the individual to formulate a self-definition.

Both theories mentioned above attempt to describe the relationship between two interpretative lens of self utilized by the individual. However, functional antagonism as a theoretical framework offers a view of oppositional interaction between the collective self and personal self that is characterized by moments of expression/repression. Functional antagonism posits the collective self and personal self as modes self-interpretation that are constantly competing for salience—the invocation of a specific interpretation of self by the individual. The individual’s dual desire for (dis)integration illustrates equal valuing of both the personal self and the collective self, but simultaneous articulation of both of these two self-conceptions based upon approximate social distance is not possible. The individual is either an interchangeable member of a group interpreting self in a collective sense or a unique person expressing an individual self-interpretation. In this sense, the individual must choose a self-definition premised upon

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<sup>129</sup> Marilyn B. Brewer, “The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time,” *Society for Personality and Social Psychology* 17 (1991): 475-482.

<sup>130</sup> Bernd Simon, “Self and Group in Modern Society: Ten Theses on the Individual Self and the Collective Self,” in *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, eds. Russell Spears et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 328.

personal distinctiveness or social commonality, a choice as suggested earlier in this chapter is influenced by motivational factors that pull the individual towards one or the other two end goals of (dis)integration. As such, there exists interconnectivity between a desire for (dis)integration, motivations, and self-saliency. For example, the individual often establishes interpersonal relationships in order to apprehend a sense of belongingness. As a result, the individual or receiver of these incentives made possible through an apprehension of belongingness via interpersonal relationships finds satisfaction in being a part coalescing with other parts in making a meaningful whole. The individual, then, identifies with the collective in such a way that shared incentives, especially expressed in belongingness, become the lens in which to interpret self yielding a collective conception of self. While in this example the collective self is expressed, the personal is repressed. This expression/repression complex brings to the forefront antagonism existing between the personal self and collective self. Although an individual's attempt to manifest one form of self leads to the repression of the other equally desirable self-conception that he/she longs to externalize, the repressed interpretation of self is not eliminated but always remains a *possible* mode of self that the individual can seek as a tentative goal. For instance, if an individual moves beyond the maximum of associations needed in order to obtain a sense of belongingness, satiation occurs. Satiation here meaning a "diminished motivation that ensues when the need to belong is already satisfies."<sup>131</sup> The individual in this way seeks to obtain gratification of some kind through the disruption of some of these same social bonds, which signifies a

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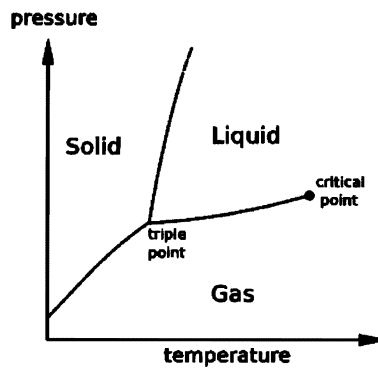
<sup>131</sup> Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin* 117 (1995): 515.

movement in the direction of differentiation resulting in the articulation of a self-definition based upon personalized uniqueness. The personal self in this way finds expression while the collective self undergoes repression. To this end, viewing the relationship between the two modes of self-interpretations articulated by the individual as one of functional antagonism reveals an association premised upon expression and repression. And, it is this theoretical highlighting of expression/repression occurring between the collective self and personal self that brings the third mode of self-interpretation into focus known as the dynamical self.

### **The Dynamical Self: Defining Oneself Through Intersectionality**

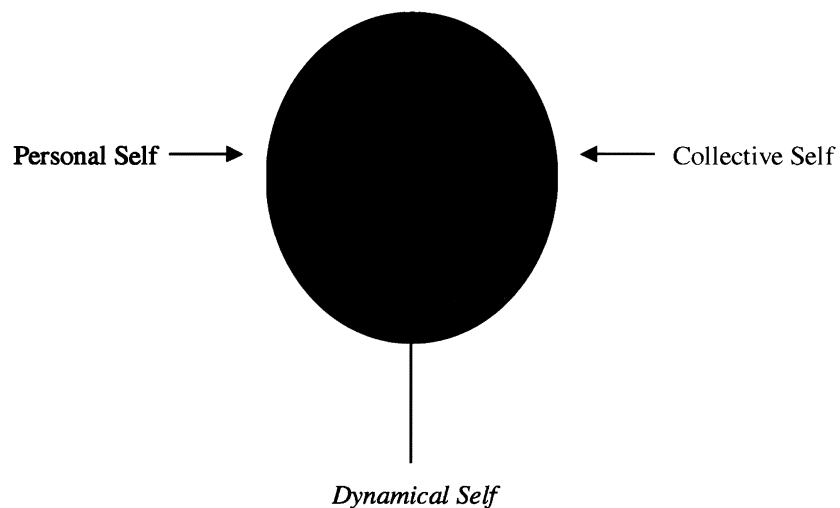
The *dynamical* self evades a restriction to an either/or existence as exhibited by the two previously presented self-interpretations. This form of viewing oneself cannot be characterized by the polar pronouns of “me” or “not me,” which are representative of the personal self and collective self, respectively. Instead, the dynamical self forms within the tensional interplay of these two modes of self. The dynamical self, unlike with personal and collective self-interpretations, evades the individual’s conscious. The unconsciousness is primarily due to the dynamical self’s place of formation. For this form of self-interpretation occurs where the edges of the collective self and personal self meet. In other words, the dynamical self finds a place of expression between the individual’s desire to separate from a group and this same individual’s desire for unification with a group. Science offers a nice illustration of this formation of the dynamical self in a term called the “triple point.” See Figure 1.





**Figure 1.** A phase diagram illustrating three phases of matter. Notice the triple point represents the place where solid, liquid, and gas intersect.

The triple point is the ideal temperature/pressure where all phases of matter—solid, liquid, and gas—co-exist. This co-existence is premised upon the simultaneous breakage and formation of bonds. Like the triple point, the dynamical self is a point of intersectionality where societal bonds are broken/formed via the individual's desire to express articulation a definition of self based upon notions of collectivity or individuality. See Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The dynamical self (turquoise) is represented at the center where personal self and collective self (green) undergo diffusion. This illustration is meant to give a visual of the interplay between the personal and collective selves and how this movement between these two

realms by means of social bondage breakage and formation yields a fluid, diffused form of self known as the dynamical self.

Therefore, this mode of self-interpretation forms where the personal self (blue) intersects with the collective self (green).<sup>132</sup> The dynamical self as this intersectional point is the “and/both” expression of self that the individual unconsciously desires, and with this the person pushes towards a fuller definition of self characterized by multidimensionality.

The dynamical self, then, points to an individual’s desire to express a picture of him/herself that includes collective and personal forms of self but extends beyond these two self-interpretations to include a self-view that is fluid and non-polar. The individual longs to express a notion of self that is truly dynamical. In this sense, individuals not only wish to define themselves through the maintenance of social solidarity or differentiation from others, but these same individuals also seek to articulate an interpretation of self that occurs at the tensional intersectionality of collectivity and individuality. The individual desires a more nuanced and complex form of self. This type of longingness for complexity is captured in religious scholar Anthony Pinn’s notion of complex subjectivity. For Pinn there is an inextricable relationship between the desire for a convoluted human subjectivity and identity formation. He states:

This subjectivity is understood as complex in that it seeks to hold in tension many ontological possibilities, a way of existing in numerous spaces of identification as opposed to a reified notion of identity...[Thus] this yearning for complex subjectivity...seeks to hold or bind together all of these various threads

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<sup>132</sup> D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (1971; reprint, New York: Routledge, 2005), 144-145. Winnicott positions self in this potential space between an inner reality and an outer reality. However, I establish different poles than Winnicott. Particularly, my conception of the dynamical self is a product of the intermediate area between the collective self-interpretation and the personal self-interpretation as carried out by the individual.

of identity development in a way that makes them essential components of a larger, tangled, and all-encompassing sense of being in more absolute terms.<sup>133</sup>

Complexity subjectivity, then, is a *yearning* to recognize various possibilities of non-fixated modes of identity formation and to hold them together in such a way as not to privilege one form over another. The dynamical self is similar to Pinn's notion of subjectivity in that it too captures a human desire for complexity.<sup>134</sup> The dynamical self, specifically, holds in tension the individual's desire to articulate "either/or" bipolarities expressed in the form of the personal self and the collective self. In this way, the dynamical self not only signifies a type of transitional structure—an intermediate complex formed due to the continuous breakage/formation of interpersonal bonds and breakage/formation of intrapersonal bonds. But, the dynamical self also represents a point of intersectionality for the breakage/formation of these specific bonds that result in the individual's articulation of self-definitions based upon notions of collectivity or individuality. This mode of self holds in tension the bipolar modes through intersectionality. The dynamical self as intersectional point is the "and/both" articulation

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<sup>133</sup> Anthony B. Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 158.

<sup>134</sup> It is important to state clear distinctions between Pinn's notion of complex subjectivity and the dynamical self as presented in this chapter in particular and the overall dissertation in general. First, both terms are characterized by the human desire for complexity, but complex subjectivity involves a wrestling with fixed notions of identity, which yields a fuller life meaning. The dynamical self points to a desire to view oneself in multiple ways without necessarily staking claims to the apprehension of life meaning, see Pinn, *Terror and Triumph*, 157-179. Secondly, Pinn's theory of complex subjectivity projects a type of uncomfortableness with "rugged" individualism, meaning that the individual is at the center of analysis. However, the individual as analytical focus is a necessary orientation for an examination of the dynamical self, see Pinn, *Terror and Triumph*, 175, 180-183. Lastly, Pinn argues that this quest for complex subjectivity is the nature of religion. The dynamical self as indicative of a longing for multidimensional self makes no such claim. Instead, religious doctrine and activities are posited as modes of externalization for this complex mode of self.

of self that the individual unconsciously desires, and with this the person pushes towards a definition of self characterized by multidimensionality, which is a way of viewing oneself through fixed modes of self expressed in the collective and personal forms of self as well as a dynamical articulation of self characterized by fluidity and non-polarity. This desire for a complex way of viewing self serves as the primary internal *push* factor underlining the individual's continuous movement between the poles of the personal self and collective self. However, there is a major question left unanswered: If the dynamical self points to the individual's ultimate desire to express a multidimensional mode of self-interpretation, then how is this unconscious desire made conscious? It is through religion, particularly, African American religion, that the individual's desire to articulate personal, collective, and dynamical forms of self finds expression.

### **Religion “as” Creative Medium for the Expression of Multiple Self-Interpretations**

The interconnectivity between self and creativity has been an object of scholarly discourse across several disciplines. Oswald Schwemmer recognizes both the creative act and becoming of self as two interrelated “points characterizing human existence”; Miriam W. Boeri and Karen Pressley examine how social power dynamics affects the construction of different forms of what they call the “creative self,” a symbolic interactionist interpretation of self; and Anthony Pinn, in his exploration of African American religion, posits human creativity as collective subversive action against modes of self-concept that are fixated by historical acts of dehumanization.<sup>135</sup> Although these

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<sup>135</sup> Oswald Schwemmer, “The Human: Between Having a World in Being a Self,” in *On the Uniqueness of Humankind*, eds. Hans-Rainer Duncker and Kathrin Priess (New York: Springer, 2005), 65-66; Miriam W. Boeri and Karen Pressley, “Creativity and Cults from Sociological and Communication Perspectives,” *Cultic Studies Review* 9 (2010): 1-39; Anthony B. Pinn, “God of Restraint: An African American Humanist Interpretation of

contemporary approaches taken from the fields of philosophy, sociology, and religious studies, respectively, expand conjunctures between self/creativity, they do not offer a way of examining a mode of self composed of both externalized conscious elements and internalized unconscious elements. However, psychoanalytical/psychological theories of creativity have considered these dimensions of externality and internality. D.W. Winnicott, for instance, posits creativity as an externalization of one's *being* that occurs between an individual's internal reality and the surrounding external reality; therefore, creativity affords an articulation of self.<sup>136</sup> "Creativity," according to existentialist psychologist Rollo May, "is the most basic manifestation of a man or a woman fulfilling his or her own basic being in the world."<sup>137</sup> For him this manifestation is indicative of an encounter between the whole individual (internal/external properties) and the objective world. These theories are useful because of their consideration of external and internal realities in the creative act, but the complexities of self are evaded because this term is treated as a one-dimensional unit in both Winnicott and May's theoretical frameworks. Although each of the approaches discussed here are essential in expanding discourse on self/creativity relations, they fail to provide a substantial framework robust enough to examine the relationship between creativity and a multidimensional conception of self

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Nimrod and the Tower of Babel," in *African American Religious Life and the Story of Nimrod*, eds. Anthony B. Pinn and Allen Dwight Callahan (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 27-34; Pinn, *Terror and Triumph*, 173-179.

<sup>136</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 71-86.

<sup>137</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (1975; reprint, New York: Norton & Company, 1994).

expressed as personal, collective, and dynamical self-interpretations. Additionally, the ways in which religion factors into self/creativity relations has been underexplored.<sup>138</sup>

In order to integrate religion into the self/creativity scheme, religion must be posited as a “creative medium.” Creativity is the capacity of an individual or a group of individuals to use elements taken from external reality as a means to bring into existence a concrete product. Here religion serves as this external reality for it becomes the medium needed to propagate the creative act, as such religion as “medium” includes but is not restricted to “people, places, objects, and events” that constitute an individual’s religious environment,” while “concrete product” signifies real existence, particular realities, and/or actual material substances operating within this same religious space.<sup>139</sup> Religion as creative medium posited in this manner provides a framework fit enough to guide an examination of how the individual(s) utilizes both the creative act (process used to bring the something into being) and creative product (the actual something that has been brought into being) as a means to articulate multiple self-interpretations.

Intersubjective creativity and intrasubjective creativity are two specific types of creativity employed by the individual to articulate the collective self and personal self, respectively, within religious spaces. In intersubjective creativity, individuals work together in order to create a product. This collaboration “involves an intricate blending of

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<sup>138</sup> Winnicott implicitly interjects religion into his exploration of self/creativity by way of his discussion of “cultural experience.” For him, cultural experience is an area beyond play in which the individual is able to creatively articulate a sense of self through object usage. It is with this realm of experience that the individual lives creatively, meaning that he/she manipulates external reality in order to construct something. Although he maintains mystic activities occur within one’s cultural experience, Winnicott does not explicitly establish an interconnection between religion, self as multi-dimensional, and creativity.

<sup>139</sup> Steven J. Heine et al. “The Meaning Maintenance Model: On the Coherence of Social Motivations,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10 (2006): 90.

skills, temperaments, effort and sometimes personalities to realize a *shared* vision of something new and useful.”<sup>140</sup> The collaborative activity of intersubjective creativity informs both the creative action of the participants and the resulting creative product, which is displayed in the “collaborative emergence” of two key elements, normalized narratives and spontaneous “bits.”<sup>141</sup> Normalized narratives call for the inclusion of previously used material into the present creative act because such material is viewed by each participant as possessing significant shared value or meaning worth preserving. Spontaneous bits, however, require interacting individuals to deviate from the sole usage of normative elements. Such a move affords possibilities of the spontaneous integration of fresh material into the collaborative act of intersubjective creativity. An example of this form of creativity finds expression in Israelite Divine Spiritual Church in New Orleans. In 1998, a group of adherents, guided by Bishop Oliver Coleman, combined ritualistic elements drawn from the Candle Drill ritual and ritual knocking to create a new collective ritual. This ritual required members to knock on strategically placed altars as they marched around the church three times.<sup>142</sup> Although the formulation of this ritual may have been the inspiration of a single person, the integration of these two normally

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<sup>140</sup> Seana Moran and Vera John-Steiner, “How Collaboration in Creative Work Impacts Identity and Motivation,” in *Collaborative Creativity: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Dorothy Miell and Karen Littleton (London: Free Association Books, 2004), 11.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Keith Sawyer and Stacy DeZutter, “Distributed Creativity: How Collective Creations Emerge From Collaboration,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 3 (2009): 87-90. These authors, in their case study of an improvisational theater group, highlight the “collaborative emergence” of specific predicates as associated with forms of creativity considered non-individualistic, which they coin “distributed creativity.” Improvised narrative and “bits” of dialogue are these elements that are recognized by the authors.

<sup>142</sup> Stephen C. Wehmeyer, “Indians at the Door: Power and Placement on New Orleans Spiritual Church Altars,” *Western Folklore* 66 (2007): 31-33. For detail information concerning the Candle Drill ritual, see Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 115. Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 116-117.

separated ritualistic elements processional marching and altar knocking is contingent upon agreement from other participating members. This form of creativity, then, represents a collaborative effort that it is not propelled by the action of an individual but upon interaction and agreement of the collective. Thus, both the action guiding the formation and emerging ritual as a creative product are characterized by a sense of “we-ness.”

This privileging of a quality of “we-ness” in collaborative creativity serves as a viable outlet for the individual to express a collective sense of self within a religious setting. Specifically, this predicate of “we-ness” depersonalizes the individual in that equal distribution of creativeness among members takes precedence over the creative act as conceived by the individual, which provides a measure of satisfaction for the individual’s desire for group solidarity. Intersubjective creativity, as performed in the religious space, additionally affords this same person an outlet to express the collective self—a perception of self based upon shared categorical membership. The individual’s desire to both participate in the collective domain of sociological duality and express a complex self-definition are actualized. The individual as a collaborative part of a whole displays an interpretation of self that is larger than individuality for intersubjective creativity provides the person with a relational “meaning-making system that is intersubjectively constructed between collaborators,” a signification of an externalized incentive for group solidarity that actualizes an internal desire for the articulation of a corresponding collective self.<sup>143</sup> To this end, intersubjective creativity is ultimately propelled by the desire of the individual to articulate a definition of self that is generated

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<sup>143</sup> Moran and John-Steiner, “How Collaboration in Creative Work Impacts Identity and Motivation,” 14.



through the prioritization of collectivity, a notion of self-interpretation introduced earlier as the collective self.

While the collective self and group solidarity are brought to the fore in intersubjective creativity, this form of creativity does so at the expense of the individual's creative agency. Individuals counterbalance this marginalization of personal agency by seeking out ways to bring their unique contribution into the foreground of creativity. Intrasubjective creativity becomes a means to accomplish such a feat. Intrasubjective creativity is the capacity of the individual alone to transform elements selected from external reality into a new creative product. Transformation occurs in two steps. First, the individual selects material to be included in the creative act. Material available for selection includes but is not limited to ideas, symbols, and concrete objects, all possessing varying degrees of transformative potential (ability to be morphed). This freedom to choose material to be appropriated in intrasubjective creativity grants the individual a degree of personal agency, which is not characteristic of intersubjective creativity. Secondly, the person alters the material selected. Transformation via alteration leads to the emergence of a new creative product that is an extension of the original material. This type of product occurs when the individual pushes personal attributes of uniqueness to the forefront of the creative act without causing a complete rupturing of the original material. The Black Hawk altar found in St. Daniel's Spiritual Church before its destruction by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 illustrates this form of alteration in intrasubjective creativity.<sup>144</sup> See Figure 3.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Stephen Wehmeyer, "Indian Altars of the Spiritual Church: Kongo Echoes in New Orleans." *African Arts*, Volume 33 (2000): 66.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 3.** Black Hawk altar at St. Daniel Spiritual Church. New Orleans, 1997. Photo: Stephen C. Wehmeyer. Altar constructed by Bishop Daniel Jackson, the minister of St. Daniel's Spiritual Church.

Although this altar is located in a public space, Bishop Daniel Jackson is the designated creator. Bishop Jackson changes the traditional set-up of this altar by placing both Buddha and the Black Hawk statues on the same altar. This is a collaboration not traditionally expressed on public Spiritual(ist) altars. Therefore, while Bishop Jackson integrates the traditional symbol of Black Hawk, he changes this same altar with his introduction of an Eastern religious symbol in the form of a laughing Buddha. This altar as the creative product of Bishop Jackson's manipulation of traditional Spiritual(ist) material displays the creative encounter between him as individual creator and the external reality of this religious space. Therefore, Bishop Jackson, as an individual, employs alteration to "rebel" against the constraints offered by original selected material, potential barriers to impede the creative act, which involves the manipulation of material reality by him. Through his reconstitution of the original material, Bishop Jackson exerts a sense of uniqueness by way constructing a creative product that is different from the

original starting material. Thus, the Black Hawk altar, representative of a new creative product, embodies Bishop Jackson's uniqueness and individuality.

Product embodiment is the material form of an actualized desire of the individual to express uniqueness and individuality. Embodiment is preceded by the projection of these desires. Projection here denotes the act of ascribing internal psychical content unto external reality. Projection, especially as played out in intrasubjective creativity, then, occurs in the transformational interaction that occurs between the internal reality of the individual and external reality. The individual "gathers objects or [other forms] of phenomena from external reality, [manipulates] and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality."<sup>146</sup> For example, continuing with the Black Hawk altar of St. Daniel Spiritual Church, Bishop Jackson attests to such a manipulation of material. See figure 3. He states, "I work [Black Hawk] with the compass, the square, the protractor."<sup>147</sup> Like if I need to square off some work. If I've got a problem, I go back to what I was taught in Geometry, Algebra, and Trigonometry."<sup>148</sup> Thus, Bishop Jackson's manipulation of selected material i.e. mathematical tools not only symbolizes his manipulation of the Indian spirit of Black Hawk, but this activity also points to a more subtle projective activities. The alteration of material serves as an outlet in which he projects an internalized desire for differentiation. This desire is then incorporated into the forming creative product. The product *embodies*, for example, "the personal past of [Bishop Jackson's] high school classroom," a personalized impulse captured within the

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<sup>146</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 69.

<sup>147</sup> Bishop Jackson keeps his working tools behind a framed photo of Mother Leafy Anderson, founder of Spiritual(ist) churches in New Orleans. In Figure 3, this photo is located at the rear of the Black Hawk Altar near the American flag.

<sup>148</sup> Wehmeyer, "Red Mysteries," 152.

materiality of the “compass, square, and the protractor.”<sup>149</sup> The creative product in general symbolizes an embodiment of the individual’s internalized desire to differentiate from others in order to define self as unique and individually oriented. This act of projecting a conscious desire for social differentiation in an attempt to exert a personal definition of self premised on uniqueness/individuality extends transitional interaction beyond that of an encounter between the physical realities of the person and selected material to include how psychological domains of the individual plays a part in intrasubjective creativity.

While intersubjective creativity and intrasubjective creativity are two ways used by the individual to express self-definitions based on collectivity and individuality, respectively, these modes of creativity taken alone do not afford this same individual the ability to articulate the third self-interpretation. As suggested earlier, the dynamical self is a view of self that forms at the place where social bonds are broken resulting in personal differentiation and where these same bonds are reconstructed yielding group solidarity. Since the dynamical self forms through this tensional interplay between the collective self and personal self, expression of this mode of self requires the use of intersubjective and intrasubjective modes of creativity. Again, African American Spiritual(ist) churches offer a space where the individual can employ both forms of creativity as a means to manifest the dynamical self. The Uncle Bucket ritual, a ritualized performance carried out in Israelite Divine Spiritual Church of New Orleans serves as an example. See Figure 4.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries,” 152.

<sup>150</sup> Wehmeyer, “Indians at the Door,” 67.



**Figure 4.** Uncle Bucket altar at Israelite Divine Spiritual Church in New Orleans, 1997. Photo: Stephen Wehmeyer. The bucket containing sand serves a site of petitioning, while the lap of the Native American statue serves as the site of offering.

Although this ritual starts with collective singing, petitions, and movement, the heart of this activity calls each individual to approach the Uncle Bucket altar separately. While standing at the altar, the individual places an offering in Uncle's lap; places three fingers into the bucket of sand, and inscribes their request in the sand. This ritual not only illustrates how Spiritual(ist) adherents "work" the spirit of Uncle Bucket, but it also affords the individual via "a personal wish" to enjoy a momentary reprieve from collectivity defined by interpersonal relationships. The individual for a moment is set apart from the collective. Differentiation is based upon what is written in the sand. In this way, the sand on the Uncle Bucket altar in particular and the ritualized space of Israelite Divine Spiritual Church in general affords the individual an opportunity to separate from the group dynamics in such a way as to articulate a more personalized conception of self, one premised on distinguishing characteristics of the person. Although adherents are given this opportunity to articulate a personal notion of self, communal activities of participants precede this expression in the Uncle Bucket ritual. For instance, the ritual

begins only with congregants standing and singing together—*all* must perform these tasks together in order to proceed as individuals to the Uncle Bucket altar.<sup>151</sup> In this way, “the collective self is a self-interpretation centered on a socially shared (collective or social categorical) self-aspect and therefore is basically a one-dimensional.”<sup>152</sup> The individual stands not as “I” but “We” and as such undergoes depersonalization. The individual projects a definition of self through the shared category expressed in the form of ritualized unity through body posture and voice. Along with these personal and collective elements of the Uncle Bucket ritual, there is a transitional portion of this ritual in which adherents “stand in line.” This portion of the ritual occurs between communal worship and individual petitioning at the bucket. Therefore, in this line, adherents stand at the intersection of collectivity and individuality. Such inclusiveness of individualized and collectivized moments of creativity in the Uncle Bucket ritual affords a type ritualized interplay between the personal self and collective self, respectively, which allows for the displaying of the dynamical self via “standing in line.” This dynamical form of self holds in tension the individual member’s desire to express views of self that are both personal and collective. And, with the presence of all three forms of self-interpretation, the individual or Spiritual(ist) member as a representation of multidimensionality becomes a viable subject to be used in a social analysis of African American religion in particular and religion in general.

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<sup>151</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 115.

<sup>152</sup> Bernd Simon and Claudia Kampmeier, “Revisiting the Individual Self: Toward a Social Psychological Theory of the Individual Self and the Collective Self,” in *Individual Self, Relational Self, and Collective Self*, eds. Constantine Sedikides and Marilynn B. Brewer (Philadelphia: Psychological Press, 2001), 201.

As illustrated through examples employed in the last section of this chapter, African American Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans represent spaces in which adherents are able to articulate multiple modes of self-definition through various forms of creativity. Elaborate private/public altars, intricately-woven ritualistic activities centering on both the individual and the collective, and complex doctrinal frameworks that includes principles of personal/collective-oriented healing and prophecy—these Spiritual(ist) spaces serve as manifestation sites for the expression of conscious and unconscious desired selves that are based upon individuality, collectivity, and fluidity. Before exploring these African American Spiritual(ist) churches as creative outlets for the expression of multidimensional forms of self, a history of this tradition is offered in the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Spiritualism in the “Big Easy”: A Historical Narrative of African American Spiritual(ist) Churches of New Orleans**

In chapter two, African American religion is posited as a creative medium used by individuals to express multiple interpretations of themselves. Brief examples of how individuals express personal, collective, and dynamical self-interpretations were offered using rituals from African American Spiritual(ist)<sup>153</sup> Churches of New Orleans. The employment of these ecclesiastical spaces was intentional. Such usage provided a preview of the elaborate doctrinal beliefs and ritualistic activities that characterizes Spiritual(ist) churches. This third chapter offers a historical mapping of the development of these diverse Spiritual(ist) doctrines and rituals. Chapter three, then, serves as a scaffold for the dissertation’s final chapter, which examines how individuals use a variety of Spiritual(ist) rituals/doctrines to express multiple forms of self-interpretations.

This chapter’s five sections present a historical narrative of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches from 1920 to the present-day. The first section explores the activities of Mother Leafy Anderson, specifically, her establishment of an institutionalized form of Spiritualism in New Orleans known as Spiritualist churches. While Mother Anderson is responsible for the setting of a Spiritualist foundation, the contributions of three other Spiritualist mothers—Mother Catherine Seals, Mother Kate Wilson Francis, and Mother Clara James Hyde—extended this Spiritual(ist) doctrinal/ritual framework. Their specific contributions are taken up in the second

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<sup>153</sup> Spiritual(ist) is used here to capture the usage of the terms “Spiritualist” and “Spiritual” in the early years and later years of the movement, respectively.



section. The third section traces a shift from Spiritualism as introduced by earlier figures to a more Christianized form. This transition to “Divine Spiritualism” along with the growing presence of gender discrimination led to multiple schisms within the Spiritual(ist) movement in New Orleans. Section four covers two examples involving Archbishop E. J. Johnson and Archbishop Lydia Gilford. Section five explores the activities of Spiritual(ist) churches during the decade before Hurricane Katrina, while the last section of this chapter examines the current state of Spiritual(ist) churches in the post-Katrina “new” New Orleans.

### **Mother Leafy Anderson: Founder of New Orleans Spiritualist Churches**

While Mother Leafy Anderson’s arrival to the Crescent City has been the subject of much debate, the date associated with her direct involvement in the institutionalization of Spiritualism through the formation of the first Spiritualist church in New Orleans is less contested.<sup>154</sup> On October 25, 1920, the State of Louisiana granted an official charter to the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church (E.L.C.S.C.) signed by president/founder Mother Leafy Anderson along with eight other members—Walter L. Le Cou, Mayme Batty, Hellen Smith, Isabella Henderson, James Cooper, John Toinby, Katie Hill, and G. H. Hill—who served as directors of this newly incorporated Spiritualist body.<sup>155</sup> In less than five months, the E.L.C.S.C. used a loan financed by the Italian Homestead Association to purchase a lot from Florville Whittaker. The lot was located in the sixth

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<sup>154</sup> Hans A. Baer provides a summation of this debate in his work, *The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 19. He brings into the center of this debate Zora Neale Hurston, Robert Tallant, and Andrew Kaslow.

<sup>155</sup> Notarial Archives Research Center, “Charter/Act of Incorporation for the Eternal Life Spiritualist Church,” *Records of Charles B. Upton: Volume 5 – Act 348B*, (New Orleans, 1920): 1-4.

district of New Orleans at 2719 Amelia Street between Magnolia Street and Clara Street.<sup>156</sup> Mother Anderson and the E.L.C.S.C. would build the first Spiritualist church in the city on this lot. See Figure 5a and 5b.<sup>157</sup>



**Figure-5a.** Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church with a picture of Mother Leafy Anderson. New Orleans, 1926. Photo: *Louisiana Weekly*. This photo was utilized in advertising services of various churches within the E.L.C.S.C.A.



**Figure-5b.** Present day photo of the first Spiritualist church built in New Orleans under the leadership of Mother Leafy Anderson, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. New Orleans, 2010. Photo: Margarita Guillory.

Both the purchase and location of this lot signified two significant accomplishments.

First, the reception of a mortgage from the Italian Homestead Association was significant in and of itself. The primary purpose of this group was to “provide opportunities for *Italians* in New Orleans to accumulate real estate [in order to promote] economic success

<sup>156</sup> Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28). This information concerning the purchase has been drawn from a transcribed copy of the act of sale that was notarized by John R. Upton on March 21, 1921.

<sup>157</sup> Figure 1a appeared on the front page of *The Louisiana Weekly*, an African American owned and operated newspaper in New Orleans, see the advertisement for “St. Joseph’s Eternal Life Mission,” 4 December 1926, 1. The photo represented by Figure 2a was taken by Margarita Simon Guillory on July 28, 2010.

of *Italians* in the city’’<sup>158</sup> (emphasis added). Thus, providing financial means for a group whose members and founder were of African descent did not line up with its primary mission. In regard to location, Amelia Street was located in the sixth district—a locale heavily populated with both persons of African descent and Italian born residents, the latter counting over one thousand in number. While the contributive roles played by Italians in the beginning stages of the Spiritualist tradition has received little scholarly attention, their presence can be seen in the early developmental stages of the Spiritualist church in New Orleans.

By 1926, Mother Anderson formed the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Association (E.L.C.S.A.), the first Spiritualist association established in New Orleans.<sup>159</sup> The E.L.C.S.A. was a national association composed of sixteen Spiritualist churches.

**Table 2: Spiritualist Churches of the E.L.C.S.A. Recorded at the 1926 Convention in New Orleans<sup>160</sup>**

Spiritualist Church	Location	Founder
Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church	New Orleans, LA	Leafy Anderson
First Sacred Heart Church	New Orleans, LA	Lena Scovato
St. Joseph Spiritualist	New Orleans, LA	R. A. Chapman

<sup>158</sup> Joseph Maselli and Dominic Candeloro, *Italians in New Orleans* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 29.

<sup>159</sup> The exact founding date is not documented, but a *Louisiana Weekly* article documents the activities of this organization in 1926.

<sup>160</sup> This table was compiled using information taken from an article of the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Conference held in New Orleans from November 25-28, 1926. See M. D. Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 4 December 1926, 1 and 8. Notice that the author of this article is also a founder of a Spiritualist church that belongs to Mother Anderson’s association. This chart does not include the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church that scholars believe that Mother Anderson formed in Chicago in 1913, primarily due to the lack of evidence available that supports that this church ever existed. Please note no titles have been used in this table because titles changed over time.

Church		
Faith Mission	New Orleans, LA	Esma O'Connor
Warren Chapel No. 1	Chicago, IL	Alberta Price Bennett
Warren Chapel No. 2	Marianna, AR	Alberta Price Bennett
Warren Chapel No. 3	Memphis, TN	Alberta Price Bennett
Becking Light Church	Chicago, IL	E. G. P. Lanchart
True Light Spiritualist Church	Chicago, IL	E. McCousins
St. Anthony Church	Little Rock, AR	Magnolia Lee
Minor Temple	Pensacola, FL	M. D. Minor
Golden Leaf		Ella Henderson
John Spiritual Mission	Chicago, IL	Mollie Lexy
Eternal Life Spiritualist Church of Bienville Street	New Orleans, LA	n/a
Revealing Rock Church	New Orleans, LA	Joseph Gonzales
Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church	Biloxi, MS	Leafy Anderson

**Table 2.** Spiritualist churches belonging to the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Association. These churches are formally acknowledged in the 1926 annual conference held in New Orleans.

These churches of E.L.C.S.A. were located in Louisiana, Illinois, Florida, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. African American women established approximately three-fourths of these churches (First Sacred Heart Church would serve as the only exception for it was founded by an Italian woman named Reverend Lena Scovato). Under the leadership of Mother Anderson, the E.L.C.S.A. served as an outlet where marginalized members of society, whether due to their race and/or gender, were free to express a sense of agency.

The E.L.C.S.C. (“mother church”) served as the focal point for the national organization of Spiritualist churches and a space in which Mother Anderson initiated and directed social initiatives. These initiatives provided provisions for communities and individuals in need. The primary vehicle used to supply these social services was the Relief Aid Club of E.L.C.S.C. In 1927, Mother Anderson and members of the Relief Aid Club organized a donation drive that contributed food, clothing, and cash to selected

areas affected by the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. Flood relief efforts sponsored by the E.L.C.S.C. were directed towards Lelia—a small town located outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi that was largely populated by African Americans. Inequity in the distribution of supplies and unpaid labor in the rebuilding of levees served as two primary reasons for the selection of Lelia, Mississippi. In an article appearing in the *Louisiana Weekly*, Mother Anderson utilized racial politics in an effort to generate donations from African Americans in the local New Orleans community. She says:

We are still asking for aid of people of our race; we are asking them to answer the cries and prayers of the needy, who are now without homes, shelter, proper clothing, many of them without friends; they are our mothers, fathers, brethen and sisters...Remember the whites are caring for their people and if anything is left it is given to the Negroes.<sup>161</sup>

Mother Anderson in the above statement publicly identified a target community that would directly benefit from the efforts of the Relief Aid Club. Specifically, she called upon African Americans to help their fellow African American “mothers, fathers, brethen, and sisters of Mississippi.” In response to Mother Anderson’s public request, the relief club received donations in the form of cash, clothing, and food from Spiritualist churches in the E.L.C.S.A., local musicians like Sam Robinson, working class people of the sixth district, and well-known Italian families in the surrounding community like the Nusoccos and Scovatos.<sup>162</sup> These efforts continued from May of 1927 until Mother Anderson’s death in December 1927. The Relief Aid Club of E.L.C.S.C., in addition to flood relief efforts, also provided shelter, food, and clothing for the needy in the local

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<sup>161</sup> “Mrs. Anderson and A.P. Bennett Aid Flood Folk: Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church Sends Mrs. A. Price Bennett to Lelia,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 7 May 1927, 3.

<sup>162</sup> “Mrs. Bennett Writes About Flood in Miss.: Letter to the Eternal Life Church From Mrs. Bennett Discusses Suffering and Needs,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 14 May 1927, 8.

communities surrounding the “mother church,” primarily the sixth and lower seventh districts.

While Mother Anderson utilized the Spiritualist tradition as a vehicle to promote social initiatives, she, more importantly, became the progenitor of foundational Spiritualist doctrinal frameworks and ritualistic activities. Cosmology, healing, and prophecy represented three elements that she incorporated into the construction of a Spiritualist belief system. First, Mother Anderson promoted a specific Spiritualist cosmology, which centered on the spirit world. Spirits were seen as omnipresent entities endowed with the ability to manifest themselves in the earthly realm.<sup>163</sup> Humans served as vessels by which spirits gained access to the world of materiality. Mother Anderson introduced these “spiritual guides” as earth bound spirits that sought manifestation through human embodiment. A *Louisiana Weekly* article described the manifestation of spirits during a Friday night session held at the “mother church.” The healing portion of this service was followed by “prayer led by the Spirit Virgin Mary through Reverend L. Anderson.”<sup>164</sup> The Spirit Virgin Mary also anointed Spiritual(ist) leaders in this service.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, “Spirit remarks [were given] by the invisible spirit teacher [and] words of encouragement were spoken to all through the wonderful spirits demonstrating through Mother Anderson.”<sup>166</sup> Spirits, therefore, gained entrance into the realm of materiality *through* Mother Anderson. Specific actions accompany these spiritual

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<sup>163</sup> Todd Jay Leonard, *Talking to the Other Side: A History of Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2005), 94.

<sup>164</sup> Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 4 December 1926, front page.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 8.

manifestations. Prayers, anointings, remarks, and encouraging words were released due to the working of spirits “through” the body of Mother Anderson.

During the 1926 convention of E.L.C.S.A., Mother Anderson openly introduced three other spirit guides: (1) Father Jones, (2) White Hawk, and (3) Black Hawk.<sup>167</sup> Father Jones was considered by Mother Anderson to be the head spiritual force controlling all other spirits. He was her primary spiritual guide for Father Jones came to her one night and promised his allegiance to Mother Anderson only if she became his student. As his student, he would teach her how to “master all evil.”<sup>168</sup> The spirit of Father Jones was documented in a *Louisiana Weekly* article covering the 1926 E.L.C.S.A. convention. The article stated, “The Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Association convened at No. 12, Church of E.L.C.S.A., 2719 Amelia Street, Thursday morning, opening at 5 o’clock prayer service, with a very large attendance. Prayer service was conducted by Father Jones.”<sup>169</sup> He was the first spirit manifested in the conference. The role he played in the opening of this conference further solidified him a leading spiritual guide recognized by E.L.C.S.A. churches. Two Native American spiritual guides, White Hawk and Black Hawk, were also introduced during this conference. White Hawk was only listed as a spiritual guide in this same article. None of this spirit’s activities were documented in Minor’s article.<sup>170</sup> Black Hawk, on the other hand, received more

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<sup>167</sup> Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 4 December 1926, 8.

<sup>168</sup> See Robert McKinney interview with Mother Dora Tyson, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28), 3.

<sup>169</sup> Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” front page.

<sup>170</sup> Although Mother Anderson in this same article acknowledges White Hawk as one of her spiritual guides, the use of this guide is rarely found in documented form. A brief discussion of White Hawk does occur in an interview with Mother Dora Tyson, student

attention. Black Hawk ended nightly service during the conference; Black Hawk authorized dismissals. “Collections were [also] taken up by Black Hawk.” Mother Anderson healed through this Native American spiritual guide. In this way, Black Hawk served as watchman, protector, and healer. Both White Hawk and Black Hawk were Native American spirits present in the early historical development of modern American Spiritualism. Stephen Wehmeyer documented this presence of “Indian” spirits:

Early Spiritualists [wrote] frequently of mediums speaking in “Indian tongues,” or in a broken patois identifiable as “Indian.” “War Whoops” were frequently heard in the more unrestrained séances. Indian Spirits were (and still are) frequently depicted by “paintings or drawing mediums. Documents in “Indian” letters were received by automatic writing and kept as untranslatable but tangible proof of spirit presence. In Spiritualist periodicals like the Telegraph Papers and the Banner of Light, Indian Spirits were quoted, written about, and depicted in illustrations.”<sup>171</sup>

Native American spirits in this way penetrated every doctrinal/ritual fiber of modern American Spiritualism. Mother Anderson, while living in Chicago, was exposed to Spiritualist teachings concerning Native American spirit guides. This exposure served as one of the primary catalysts fueling her introduction of Native American spirits into the cosmology of New Orleans Spiritualist churches.

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of Mother Anderson, she states, “...in Chicago Mother Anderson used White Hawk Indian Saint whose power was limited to Chicago only.” See Robert McKinney interview with Mother Dora Tyson, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28).

<sup>171</sup> Stephen Connor Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries: ‘Indian’ Spirits and the Sacred Landscapes of American Spiritualism” (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2002), 128. Much of Wehmeyer’s information concerning Native American presence comes from a comprehensive history of the first century of the movement, see Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years’ Record of the Communion Between Earth and the World of Spirits* (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1970).



Spiritual guides were also instrumental in the prophetic dimension of the Spiritualist tradition in New Orleans. Prophetic utterances were espoused in both public and private arenas. Concerning the public sphere, Mother Anderson utilized theatrical performance as a platform to prophesy. For example, in a Thanksgiving theatrical event, Mother Anderson along with other Spiritualists like Reverend Lena Scovato, Lloyd Nuccuso and Reverend A. Price Bennett espoused “messages from the Mayflower.”<sup>172</sup> Public prophetic messages were also given during church services held throughout the week at E.L.C.S.C. Mother Anderson called these public prophecies “phenomena,” which involved her “telling individuals about their futures.”<sup>173</sup> At times, a prophecy given in the public arena would lead to the receiver being instructed to set up a private appointment in order to receive a more detailed prophetic message not deemed for those in an open forum. Therefore, negotiating public/private dimensions, as displayed in public/private prophecies, originated in the early life of the Spiritualist churches of New Orleans. Mother Anderson constructed a Spiritualist doctrinal/ritualistic framework in which spirits operated through human agents in order to promote healing and prophecy for as one Spiritualist attested to in an transcribed interview with Robert McKinney, “She [Mother Anderson] greeted the church, sang with the church and then blessed everyone;

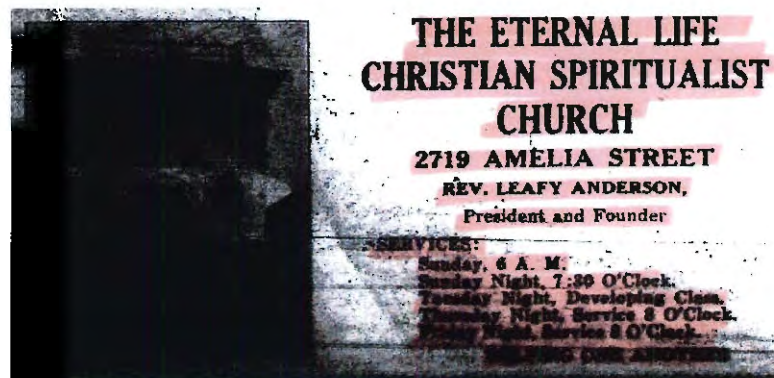
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<sup>172</sup> Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” front page. Notice the participatory role of Italians like Scovato and Nuccuso played in the ritualistic activities of the early life of the Spiritualist church in New Orleans.

<sup>173</sup> See Robert McKinney interview with Mother Dora Tyson, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28), 4.

she read the past, present and future of those who wanted to know about ‘what de spirits says er bout dem;’[and] she cured the sick with the assistance of her co-workers.”<sup>174</sup>

Mother Anderson used development classes as a means to further disseminate this Spiritualist belief system throughout New Orleans. These classes provided the individual with the opportunity to “enhance his or her psychic and mediumistic abilities under the tutelage of an experienced teacher who is a psychic or medium.”<sup>175</sup> Mother Anderson, representative of this type of “experienced teacher” offered such developing classes at the “mother church,” Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church.<sup>176</sup> See Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Advertisement for Mother Anderson’s Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church appearing in the *Louisiana Weekly* (1926). Services offered by Anderson includes a “Developing Class” on Tuesday nights.

Mother Tyson, a graduate of one of Mother Anderson’s “developing class,” described this pedagogical setting in an interview. She stated, “Class night was held on Tuesday...Mother Anderson had from seventy-five to eighty persons in her classes and charged one dollar per lesson. She taught her students how to ‘prophesy’, heal, pray and

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<sup>174</sup> Robert McKinney interview with Father Thomas, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28).

<sup>175</sup> Leonard, *Talking to the Other Side*, 232.

<sup>176</sup> Advertisement for “The Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 11 December 1926, 4.

see spirits. [We] were instructed in how to read the bible occasionally.”<sup>177</sup> Father Thomas was another Spiritualist leader trained in the developing classes of Mother Anderson. In an interview with Robert McKinney, he gave an overall depiction of Mother Anderson’s first class: “Her first graduating class numbered seventy-five or eighty persons who had paid one dollar weekly for fifty-two weeks and fifteen dollars for the certificate.”<sup>178</sup> Three things can be extracted from these descriptions offered by Mother Tyson and Father Thomas. First, Mother Anderson was viewed as a gifted Spiritualist. Large numbers of individuals who saw themselves as possessing certain spiritual abilities but sought to expand these gifts were attracted to the classroom of Mother Anderson. Secondly, these classes provided stable income for Mother Anderson. Lastly, although “Christian” appeared in the name of Mother Anderson’s church and association, the spiritual teaching took precedence in these developing classes. Developing classes served as an outlet in which Spiritualist doctrine of healing and prophecy would continue to live on even after the death of Mother Leafy Anderson in December 1927.

### **Three Mothers: Expansion of New Orleans Spiritualist Churches Through Mothers Seals, Francis, and Hyde**

By 1924, “three Spiritualist mothers” joined Mother Anderson in a quest to infuse Spiritualist doctrinal principles into to the religious fabric of New Orleans. However, unlike the latter, the former female figures would take the Spiritualist movement beyond the 20s into the 30s. Mother Catherine’s Manger/Temple of Innocent Blood would serve

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<sup>177</sup> See Robert McKinney interview with Mother Dora Tyson, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28), 3.

<sup>178</sup> See Robert McKinney interview with Father Thomas, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28), 1.

as a sacred refuge for people discounted in the social fabric of New Orleans, while Mother Kate, despite rumors of her ties with hoodoo, would utilize ritualistically driven combative methods to administer spiritual healing to both black and white residents of the Crescent City. And, last but not least, Mother Hyde would combine conjuration and biblical based Spiritualism to heal the broken spirits, bodies, and minds of New Orleans residents.

*Mother Catherine Seals' "Manger" and the Church of the Innocent Blood*

An article in the *Louisiana Weekly*, "Funeral Attracts Thousands: Saints of Both Races Show Tribute," captured the influence of Mother Catherine Seals (Mother Catherine) on the city of New Orleans during the 1920s.<sup>179</sup> "Undaunted by the inclemency of the weather," the inscriber of this article maintained, "several thousands of staunch and devoted followers of Mother Catherine, journeyed to the final resting place of the woman who was the founder of the second largest cult in America."<sup>180</sup> The racial dynamics and adherent numbers captured in this story were the result of Mother Catherine's appropriation of the Spiritualist tradition, which was premised upon a willingness to provide aid to all those in need regardless of race.

Mother Catherine, after studying under Mother Leafy Anderson, purchased a lot at 2420 Charbonnet Street, and built a small chapel she called the House of the Innocent Blood in 1922. Timing in regard to the establishment of this church indicated that both Mothers Anderson and Catherine were actively engaged in the Spiritualist movement simultaneously for about five years. However, the latter would continue the expansion of

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<sup>179</sup> "Funeral Attracts Thousands: Saints of Both Races Show Tribute," *The Louisiana Weekly*, 23 August 1930, front page.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

Spiritualism in the Crescent City beyond the death of the former. Mother Catherine's chapel, although small in structure, became well known for its interior ornateness. Zora Neale Hurston, in an essay entitled, "Mother Catherine," shared with her readers a first-hand account of this elaborate interior space:

A place of barbaric splendor, of banners, of embroideries, of images bought and images created by Mother Catherine herself; of an altar glittering with polished brass and kerosene lamps. There are 356 lamps in this building, but not all are upon the main altar. The walls and ceilings are decorated throughout in red, white and blue. The ceiling and floor in the room of the Sacred Heart are stripped in three colors and the walls are panelled. The panels contain a snake design...[Honestly,] it would take a volume to describe in detail all of the things in and about this chapel...<sup>181</sup>

From 1922 to 1928, the number of followers (around 300) had outgrown this small chapel filled with hanging banners, graven images, and glowing altars.<sup>182</sup> By 1929, Mother Catherine erected a new building, which became known simply as the "Manger." Catherine Dillon, a WPA writer in New Orleans, recorded a quite vivid depiction of the exterior and interior of the new edifice:

The Church of Innocent Blood [i.e. The Manger], which stands about forty feet from the original manger, occupies a space of about fifty by sixty and accommodates around three hundred people...statues and painted pictures of saints adorned its interior. A strange altar, with a motley array of decorations, forms the center of interest...A column, constructed along the same lines as the statues, resembling a totem-pole, was reared up to symbolize the Key of Heaven...Seven feet from the altar [was] a miniature Manger, surrounded by unusual animals...Hanging about twenty feet from the crude sanctuary, a balcony which holds a piano and sufficient chairs for the singers...[accompanying] the statues and pictures [of saints were] five hundred oil lamps...<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, "Mother Catherine," in *The Sanctified Church*, ed. Zora Neale Hurston (New York: Marlowe and Company, 1997), 23.

<sup>182</sup> Catherine Dillon, "The Manger of True Light," Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 27), 2.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 2-3.

Based upon the above description, elements contained within the original chapel were also implemented into the interior space of the Manger, but new material objects arose: “Key of Heaven” column, musical instruments, and “unusual animals” surrounding a raised miniature manger. Dillon offered additional information concerning the function of religious objects like the “Key of Heaven.” She stated, “Pious members of the Manger made wishes and offered up prayers to this strange object of veneration.”<sup>184</sup> This sacred column symbolized a key endowed with the power to open heavenly doors. Such an expansion signaled a primary difference between the two early matriarchal figures of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans. Mother Catherine sought to expand the Spiritualist tradition through the construction of an ecclesiastical compound, a move unlike that of her teacher, Mother Anderson, whose enlargement of Spiritualism occurred through the formation of a national network of Spiritualist churches. The latter sought to spread Spiritualism through the establishment of multiple ecclesiastical sites in various geographical locations, but the former remained committed to a type of localized expansion. Mother Catherine’s means of spreading Spiritualism in New Orleans was largely influenced by her commitment to two social initiatives: (1) to adopt, shelter, and feed those individuals that have been rejected by the city of New Orleans and (2) to heal and make whole bodies of all races.

In regard to the first initiative, the Manger became the home for hundreds of people. The followers of Mother Catherine were called “saints.” The Manger, in addition to housing saints, it also served as a shelter for any person without a home. Many of those entering this gateway initially sought shelter because they had no place to lay their heads,

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<sup>184</sup> Dillon, “The Manger of True Light,” 3.

but eventually, became accepted saints of the Manger. Mrs. Fuccich, a non-residential follower, attested to the receptivity of the homeless by Mother Catherine. She stated, “[Mother Catherine] was always taking people in who had no where to go and no one to help them.”<sup>185</sup> Those who became saints of the Manger could be readily identified by their uniformed attire. Both sexes adorned their bodies with white cotton. However, men i.e. “banners” were distinguished by the presence of arm bands with an “M, a crescent, C.C.” embroidered on them, while women i.e. “veils” wore “a short cotton veil with the letter J embroidered on the front center” and the same lettering/symbol of their male counterparts stitched around the forehead part of the veil.<sup>186</sup> See figure 7.<sup>187</sup>



**Figure 7.** Photo of “saints” and non-residential followers of Mother Catherine (front center of photo with a dark garment draped over her white clothing). Notice also the presence of followers of non-African descent in this photo. The Manger (large tent-like structure) appears in the background.

<sup>185</sup> See Hazel Breaux interview with Mrs. Fuccich, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 27), 2.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 1. The men and women saints were called banners and veils, respectively. See Hurston, “Mother Catherine,” 26.

<sup>187</sup> Adam Maroney, Mother Catherine Seals and Her Temple of the Innocent Blood in New Orleans, JPG, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7388762@N03/2345715225/>.

Although many men were counted among these saints, young women and children, as figure 7 also shows, composed the largest percentage of adherents housed within the walls of the Mother Catherine's Manger. "She always," one follower of Mother Catherine stated, "had girls who had babies or were going to have babies, and had no place to go, or their husbands had left them."<sup>188</sup> Mother Catherine, in a 1927 interview, confirmed this purpose of the Manger. She says, "That's Isadore, that baby. He was born in the Inn by the Manger. That's the room just off the congregation room in the church. Sweet Jesus was the first one borned in the Manger, and this little Isadore was the second born. There wasn't no room for Jesus in the inn, but there was room in this inn for Isadore."<sup>189</sup> This providing for children and unborn babies was the core of the social activity of Mother Catherine. Archbishop B. S. Johnson, another core figure of the Spiritualist movement discussed this commitment, she stated, "Her [Mother Catherine's] church was called the Manger because of her mission to save babies."<sup>190</sup> Beyond shelter, Mother Catherine also provided sustenance for both her residential/non-residential followers and those individuals who were without food because of their economical circumstances. For example, a meal of some sort was built into every service, and near the Manger grounds, a store known as Mother Catherine Success Grocery was established to provide low price staples to surrounding residents. To this end, Mother Catherine became a mother to those individuals that society had marginalized; these socially repressed persons became her adopted children. As she noted, "I got all kinds of children, but I am they mother. Some

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<sup>188</sup> Breaux interview with Mrs. Fuccich, 2.

<sup>189</sup> Marguerite Young, "Mother Catherine's Manger," *New Orleans Item*, 25 December 1927, magazine section.

<sup>190</sup> Michael P. Smith, *Spirit World: Patterns in the Expressive Folk Culture of Afro-American New Orleans* (New Orleans: New Orleans Urban Folklife Society, 1984), 46.



of 'em are saints; some of 'em are convicts; some of 'em kills babies in their bodies; some of 'em walks the streets at night—but they's all my children.”<sup>191</sup>

Healing was the second social initiative of Mother Catherine. The ability to heal and methods associated with healing became her most vital contribution to the expansion of Spiritualist doctrinal principles in New Orleans. Mother Catherine's commitment to curative acts, according to local lore, was driven by a white healer named Brother Isaiah refusal to heal her because of her “colored” skin. This rejection served as a catalyst in that Mother Catherine vowed to heal all persons regardless of their skin color. She integrated healing into the structural framework of all her services, which also included a brief summation of the church's history, hymns, prayers, demonstrations (testimonies), and fellowship feeding. Mother Catherine also conducted special mid-night healing services that lasted until dawn of the following day. Salt, castor oil, Epsom salt, and water were the primary mediums utilized by Mother Catherine in curative rituals. Healing by means of blessed oil was employed the most by her. In this ritual, a candidate for healing was guided to the main altar by an assigned saint where Mother Catherine would lay hands upon the individual calling for the aid of the spirit of Jehovah. Following this contact, the candidate swallowed a hefty portion of castor oil, which was chased with a lemon wedge. The oil anointed the internal organs and served as a therapeutic medium in which the spirit would heal. On “Epsom Salt Sunday” Mother Catherine blessed and passed out boxes of salt to those in attendance. The activation of the curative properties of this blessed salt was dependent upon the candidate's faith. For “faith,” she maintained, “in the great Jehovah, in Mother Catherine and in the power of the Holy Ghost would

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<sup>191</sup> Hurston, “Mother Catherine,” 28.

cure any ill[ness]...”<sup>192</sup> Ritualistic healing, then, involved no intercessory figure, as indicated in the Trinitarian formula that forfeits the “Son,” but, whether instigated through the utilization of blessed oil or salt, occurred as a result of the interaction between human agency and spiritual presence represented by Mother Catherine and the spirit of Jehovah, respectively. Hence, Mother Catherine Seals, like Mother Anderson, promoted a Spiritualist doctrinal structure that stressed the importance of human engagement with the spirit world. Not only did the Spiritualist tradition continue to expand because of Mother Catherine’s commitment to providing shelter, food, support, and healing to those broken by the icks of society, but it was her tenacity to continue this service to society until her death in 1930 that moved Edward Tinker to write the following words about her: “As I sat down again I began to marvel that a middle-aged colored cook, through faith alone, had been able to build in eight years such a group of structures, and implicitly to impose her leadership upon over a thousand followers, some of whom were white.”<sup>193</sup>

*Mother Kate Wilson Francis and St. Michael Temple, No. 1*

The 1920’s not only saw the rise of Mother Leafy Anderson and Mother Catherine Seals, but this decade also introduced a woman who became known as the Crescent City’s “barefoot ruler” because she refused to wear shoes after receiving her call to the Spiritualist faith. According to her, one who was barefooted stood closer to God. Mother Kate Wilson Francis, known simply as Mother Kate, would make her mark in the Spiritualist realm of New Orleans for nearly two decades (1924-1939). After serving as a

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<sup>192</sup> Edward Laroque Tinker, “Mother Catherine’s Oil,” *The North American Review* 230 (1930): 153.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

co-worker with Mother Anderson at the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church, Mother Kate established St. Michael Temple No. 1 in 1924. The church was named after her spiritual guide St. Michael the Archangel. Additionally, Mother Kate used the number one because this temple would serve as the first of many to come. By 1939 Mother Kate had established twenty-eight temples.<sup>194</sup> These temples were known as sub-churches for they each were opened in the name of Mother Kate's first temple. In this sense, unlike the churches established by Mother Anderson, each of these temples carried the same name, St. Michael Temple, with an annexed number representing their respective order of establishment. Only co-workers who had completed demonstration classes, which involved training in conversing with spirits, conducting healing through various means, and settling financial obligations, could open a church under the banner of Mother Kate. Each St. Michael Temple operated under the following mantra, "Prayer and faith will cure any disease."<sup>195</sup> This mantra was placed on a sign posted on the front of each temple opened in the name of Mother Kate. See Figure 8.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Harnett T. Kane, "Barefooted And Gold Crowned, Mother Kate Lies In State," *The Louisiana Weekly*, 29 November 1939, front page. Mother Kate's brother, Father Daniel Dupoint, who became a well-known Spiritualist in New Orleans, especially in years following his sister's death, pastored St. Michael Temple, No. 2. For two ethnographic accounts of Father Dupoint's healing services at St. Michael Temple, No. 2, see "My Visit to Church" and "Folklore: St. Michael's Temple No. 2," Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229).

<sup>195</sup> Robert McKinney, "When the Thunder is Over Mother Kate Francis Will March Right Through Hebbin's Door," Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229), 11.

<sup>196</sup> Harnett T. Kane, "Mother Kate, Foe of Hoodoos, Dies," *The Tribune, New Orleans*, 29 November 1939, 7, photo. This small cottage represented the permanent space of St. Michael's. According to WPA documents, Mother Kate was forced to move her temple several times before the final resting place at 2431 St. Anthony Street in New Orleans. See Robert McKinney, "Extract From An Article on Mother Anderson," Northwestern



**Figure 8.** Both of these photos appeared in *The Tribune* in November 1939. The photo to the left shows the interior space of St. Michael Temple, while the one to the right depicts the exterior of this same space. Notice the sign with the cross posted on the right photo. It reads, “St. Michael Spiritual Temple No. 1. Prayer and Faith will cure any disease. Services Friday and Sunday. Mother Kate Francis. Hours 8 to 9:30 P.M. White and Colored.”

The sign posted at the entrance of St. Michael Spiritual Temple signified two significant predicates ascribed to the Spiritualist activities of Mother Kate. First, her ministry was opened to all races, both “colored and white.” Such an integrated space served as a continuation of the ecclesiastical mixing of races under the guise of institutionalized Spiritualism initiated with Mother Leafy Anderson. Secondly, Mother Kate’s primary objective was to heal through the utilization of “prayer and faith” for these two actions propagate a “curing of any disease.” It was in this latter arena of healing that Mother Kate made significant contributions to the doctrinal framework and ritualistic activities of Spiritualist churches in New Orleans.

Although services at St. Michael Temple No. 1 included singing, marching, praying, giving determinations (testimonies) and preaching, the focal point of each service was the healing of individuals. Mother Kate’s healing ritual was composed of

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State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28/229).

four parts. The first constituent of this healing ritual called for the individual who sought healing to separate from those seated within in the pews of the temple. The individual moved towards Mother Kate who was located in the front of the small temple. With little degree of separation, the individual described the symptoms of their ailment, and with this information, Mother Kate would turn away and move towards her primary altar. This turn toward the altar signified the second part of the healing ritual. Mother Kate, specifically, utilized her St. Michael's altar in healing. Her successor, Ellen Fairwell, attested to this altar usage in an informal interview, she stated, "Mother Francis walk[ed] over to the statue of Saint Michael and pats him on the shoulder. She whispers sumpin' ... After a while, Mother Francis says, 'Son, fall on yo' knees and pray wid me.' [And] both of 'um fell on their knees..."<sup>197</sup> Mother Kate consults with Saint Michael; she whispers "something" to the saint, and upon reception of instruction, turns back to the individual seeking healing with instructions. Therefore, while consultation with Saint Michael symbolized the second step of ritual healing, prayer between Mother Kate and the individual initiated the third step of the healing process. Even in the state of prayer Mother Kate continuously petitioned her patron saint. She would exclaim, "I ain't callin' on nobody by you, Saint Michael, fact is, I don't need nobody but you... Open yo' wings and fly over us, Saint Michael..."<sup>198</sup> Healing as attested to by Mother Kate was issued by her spiritual guide Saint Michael. According to Mother Kate, Saint Michael's biblical role as archangel, guardian, and conqueror of evil afforded him powers to heal as well.

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<sup>197</sup> McKinney, "When the Thunder is Over Mother Kate Francis Will March Right Through Hebbin's Door," 7.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Mother Kate also employed Saint Peter in the act of healing, especially in difficult cases of healing. Specifically, she worked this saint with a red towel.

Saint veneration in the form of prayer set the tone for the last step of Mother Kate's healing process. This last step involved: (1) laying on hands, (2) reading/identifying the root of illness, and (3) exorcism and reception of healing. Mother Kate placed her hands on the person seeking healing, and with this physical contact began to pull messages from spirits. These messages often came in the form of raps. Mother Kate defined raps as "words from the other world trying to give some advice."<sup>199</sup> Messages received through such medium contained within them the cause(s) of the sickness, which she proclaimed publicly before those in the temple. Most often illnesses were recognized by Mother Kate as a manifestation of hoodoo and/or a consequence of sinful living, both acts, according to her, signified an embodiment of the devil by the individual. With the root of the illness now manifested, she again called upon her patron saint to exorcise this embodied source of evil. A co-worker at St. Michael Temple attested to the occurrence of this ritualistic activity:

"Then Mother Kate Francis grabbed the brother, threw him to the ground and poured blessed oil all over his suit...He shook and Mother Kate says, 'Move him, move him Saint Michael, move him up and down this room, make him crawl on the floor, make him stand up and roll the devil out of his system, make him faint make him almost dead, cry out and sing, make happy unto the Lawd.'"<sup>200</sup>

Once exorcised, the devil would be subjected to bottling by Mother Kate; hence, she became known by many as the "devil bottler."<sup>201</sup> The individual's public proclamation of

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<sup>199</sup> Kane, "Barefooted And Gold Crowned, Mother Kate Lies In State," 23.

<sup>200</sup> McKinney, "When the Thunder is Over Mother Kate Francis Will March Right Through Hebbin's Door," 8.

<sup>201</sup> Kane, "Mother Kate, Foe of Hoodoos, Dies," *The Tribune, New Orleans*, 29 November 1939, 7. This article gives an account of Mother Kate bottling a "little baby devil" resembling a snail. This bottling practice of Mother Kate also appeared in an editorial section of a major newspaper circulated among white residents of New Orleans, see "Devil Baiter Done," *New Orleans Item-Tribune*, 3 December 1939.

shouts out to “the Lawd” in the form of crying and singing symbolized the reception of the healing. This reception signaled the terminating point of the healing process as performed by Mother Kate. The development of an elaborate system of healing—including saint veneration, particularly that of Saint Michael, spiritual communication through rapping, and exorcism of devils—served as the most vital contribution that Mother Kate added to the doctrinal/ritualistic framework of the Spiritualist church in New Orleans.

*Mother Clara James Hyde as Conjurer, Spiritualist, and Woman of Scripture*

The “uptown” section of New Orleans in the 1920s became the focal point of Spiritualist activities for both Mother Anderson and Mother Kate, but this area would also serve as a birthing ground for the work of another important figure of the Spiritualist movement, Mother Claude James Hyde. Born and raised in Mississippi, Mother Hyde made New Orleans her home as an adult. Mother Hyde, unlike Mothers Catherine and Kate, did not receive Spiritualist training from Mother Anderson; therefore, she was able to establish her Spiritualist church free from any attachments to the founding mother of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans. Mother Hyde opened her first temple called the St. James Temple of Christian Faith on Second Street in 1923. She established St. James Temple of Christian Faith, No. 2 a few years later.<sup>202</sup> Much like the naming system used by Mother Kate, Mother Hyde by 1930 had established over twenty-eight temples whose locality extending beyond New Orleans and the rural areas of Louisiana to include Mississippi, Texas, and Arkansas. This number of temples resulted from the granting of

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<sup>202</sup> For founding date, see Federal Writers’ Project, “Some Negro Cults” in *New Orleans City Guide* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), 206. Locations of the various St. James Temples can be found in the following article, P. Rayford Brown, “Final Tribute Paid Noted Spiritualist,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 16 April 1938, front page.

sub-charters by Mother Hyde to co-workers who had completed extensive training in doctrine and practices of healing. Each temple, then, opened in the name of the “mother church,” St. James Temple of Christian Faith, to provide healing services to those in need. And, it was this banner of healing as exhibited in the formation and operation of a national network of temples that would mark Mother Hyde’s greatest contribution to the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans.

Services conducted on Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday nights at St. James of Temple of Christian Faith consisted of scripture reading, prophesy (only on the latter two nights), and the giving of determinations (testimonies). Implemented into each service were healing services. Either Mother Hyde or her co-workers (assistants) conducted healings.<sup>203</sup> Although most healings within Mother Hyde’s temple involved physical restoration, curative measures were also used to address issues of mental, emotional, and/or financial brokenness. Ritualistic healing within these services was conducted through the utilization of prayers, oil, and biblical scripture. Those assigned to heal would call those afflicted forth from their seats, and with this public confession of need, the person would receive an anointing with blessed oil accompanied with prayer and verbal pronouncement of scripture. Additionally, Mother Hyde called upon “departed ancestors” or spirits from beyond to aid in the healing process. Mother Hyde in this way promoted healing through an explicit conjoining of Christianity and Spiritualism in the form of

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<sup>203</sup> The ability of Mother Hyde’s co-workers to heal within the temple is unlike healing as exhibited in Mother Kate’s church. Only Mother Kate conducted healing rituals within St. Michael Temple. Co-workers who she trained would go on to conduct healings within sub-churches founded in the name of St. Michael. Mother Hyde, however, assigned various co-workers to perform healings at St. James Temple of Christian Faith, see an ethnographic summary of as reported by Mary Ceasar, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229).



scripture usage and communication with spirits of non-temporality, respectively. Zora Neale Hurston, in her work *Hoodoo in America*, offered a view of this conjoining of doctrinal frameworks by Mother Hyde:

She (Mother Hyde) burns candles as do the Catholics, sells the spirit oil, but gives a “cake” to be used with the oil. This bit of cake, saturated with spirit oil, is enclosed in a salve box with “God be with us” written on the top. Mother Hyde told me, “In case of trouble, arise at dawn and face the east. Take the vial of spirit oil in one hand and the cake (in its box) in the other. Read the Twenty-Third Psalm and let that be your prayer. When you come to the part, “Thou anointest my head with oil,” shake the bottle well and pour three drops on your head and anoint your head. Do this every time you want to conquer and accomplish.”<sup>204</sup>

Spiritualist and Christian elements are forefronted in Hurston’s detail description of ritualistic objects and instructions given to her by Mother Hyde. Hurston first identified the ritual objects given to her by Mother Hyde. The “spirit oil” served as the medium for the intercessory activity of a spirit(s). Like other Spiritualists, Mother Hyde believed that spirits worked best through oil. The cake was not only considered a sweet offering unto the working spirit, but it also served as a transitional connection between realms of temporality and non-temporality. The salve box with the inscription, “God be with us,” was the container in which the “bit of cake saturated with spirit oil” is stored. Along with these objects, Hurston received instructions from Mother Hyde concerning their usage, which included positioning the body in a certain direction (east), reading of a specific scripture (Psalm 23), and anointing of the head (3 drops). Sociologist of religion Erwan Dianteill, in his work *La Samaritaine Noire*, discussed the importance of Psalm 23 in the doctrines of the New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches at the turn of the twenty-first

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<sup>204</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, “Hoodoo in America,” *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 44 (1931): 320.

century.<sup>205</sup> Performance of the ritual prescribed by Mother Hyde ensured results. More importantly, Mother Hyde's ritual prescription adjoined Spiritualistic elements, mainly the use of oil as a medium for spirit activity, with explicit tenants of Christianity, which included the employment of God as inscriptive and the bible as directive, in order to promote various forms of healing. Mother Hyde's conjoining of Spiritualism and Christianity served as a vital strand that would be deliberately integrated into the expanding doctrinal framework of Spiritual churches in New Orleans.

### **Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest and the Christianization of Spiritualist Churches**

Founded in 1936, the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest consisted of the following charter Spiritualist orders: Helping Hand Spiritualist Church of Christian Love (Reverend Mother Mamie Reason), Everlasting Gospel Truth Eternal Life Spiritual Church (Reverend Bessie Johnson), Helping Hand Spiritualist Temple of the Living God (Reverend Mother L. Crosier), Universal Spiritualist Church of Christ (Reverend E. Evans), Israelite Spiritual Church (Reverend E. Johnson), St. Paul Spiritual Church (Reverend Mother E. Washington), Israelite Spiritualist Church No 2. (Mother R. Montgomery), Daniel Helping Hand Spiritualist Church (Reverend Mother Maude Shannon), St. Michael Temple (Bishop Steve Forbes), Beacon Light Spiritualist Church (Reverend Mother L. Davis), and St. Joseph Helping Hand Spiritualist Church (Reverend T. Watson).<sup>206</sup> The mission of these unified bodies of eleven Spiritualist churches was to

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<sup>205</sup> Erwan Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire: Les Églises Spirituelles Noires Américaines de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (Paris: Éditions de L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2006), 167.

<sup>206</sup> "Divine Spiritualist Orders; Elect 3 Bishops for Year," *The Louisiana Weekly*, 6 June 1936, 7. This article also lists individuals who were present at this meeting. Reverend Mothers Jackson, Shiloh, Warren, Gray, Jones, and Williams were specific persons

explicitly integrate Christian principles into Spiritualism. They called this conjoining of doctrines “Divine Spiritualism.” An article in the *Louisiana Weekly* covering the initial activities of this group introduced this new notion of Spiritualism to the city of New Orleans:

This religious body [Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest] aims to clarify the minds of the public in regard to the spirituality of Christ in the true Christian doctrine of direct communication with spirit, and as a denomination to gain such respect that is due and accorded other legal religious institutions in America. All spiritualist leaders are invited to join this organization to help further *Divine* spiritualism. [emphasis added]<sup>207</sup>

This new Spiritualist body sought to gain respect in New Orleans in particular and the country in general by promoting a Spiritualist doctrinal framework that incorporated elements of Christianity. These churches sought to teach the public about this conjoining of spiritualism and Christianity they called the “spirituality of Christ.” Specifically, their teachings brought the entire Trinity to the forefront of Spiritual(ist) doctrine. Such a doctrinal shift distinguished this association from Mothers Anderson and Catherine whose doctrines either did not recognize the divinity of Jesus or offered little attention to his divinity in relationship to God as spirit, respectively. The Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest push towards respectability served as a counteractive initiative against the negative stereotypes about Spiritualist churches circulating in the various African American communities in New Orleans. They were seen as “a background religion”, an outlet for the practice of hoodoo, and a breeding ground for “voodoo queens”—a term

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mentioned in the article. Because they were listed without church affiliations, its not clear if these female leaders possessed active churches at the time of this group’s formation.

<sup>207</sup> “Divine Spiritualist Orders; Elect 3 Bishops for Year,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 6 June 1936, 7.

used to describe Spiritualist mothers in leadership positions.<sup>208</sup> Although the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest sought to maintain a primary tenant of Spiritualism, “direct communication with the spirit,” this same association’s inclusion of Christ was both a counteractive measure and a new doctrinal element in the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans. Namely, because before this period, early mothers, including those who were still active during the time of this group’s formation did not explicitly acknowledge and/or incorporate Christ into either their doctrinal principles or ritualistic activities.

By 1937, the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest became a national organization. This national Spiritualist organization, in a conference held in February 1937, solidified governing principles of their doctrinal framework. These “major doctrines” of the organization were listed in a featured article covering the conference of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest:

1. We believe that God is a Spirit, and in unity of this Godhead, there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that the Son is the Word and the Word of God.
3. We believe that Christ did truly rise from the dead and ascended into Heaven.
4. We believe that the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and the He is co-equal in power with the Father and Son.
5. We believe that the Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation...
6. We believe that man by nature is sinful and unholy...Man is saved by confessing and forsaking his sins, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ...
7. We believe in the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the sign and seal of prophesy, healing, and speaking in tongues as recorded in Acts 2:4, 17-18, [and] 3:6-8...
8. We believe as Jesus Christ our Saviour taught that His Church is a Spiritual Church as recorded in the Gospel of John the Apostle 4:23-24.
9. We believe in the praying to the departed pious Christian souls to intercede to the Holy Spirit in helping us on our earthly journey...

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<sup>208</sup> David C. Estes, “Hoodoo? God Do: African American Women and Contested Spirituality in the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans,” in *Spellbound: Women and Witchcraft in America*, ed. Elizabeth Reis (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1998), 165.

10. We believe in the use of altars, images, and pictures of Christ and his saints. We do not pray to [them] for they have no life nor power to help us, nor sense to hear us; but we pray before them because they enliven our devotion...[they] remind us of the sufferings of Christ and those saints, that we may imitate their virtues.
11. We believe in the wearing of priestly robes in the performance of the services with the church.
12. We believe that all things used to the edification of God is holy...
13. We believe that water baptism is the sign of regeneration or new birth...
14. We believe that there are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
15. We believe that the ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's Law to either vow to the estate of single life or to abstain from marriage...
16. We believe that the governments are God-given institutions for the benefit of mankind... We hereby and herewith declare our loyalty to the President and the Constitution of the United States, and pledge fidelity to the flag for which the republic stands.<sup>209</sup>

These sixteen declarative points contain elements of Spiritualism initiated by early mothers of the movement. For instance, doctrinal principles of healing and prophesy (principle 7) remained a part of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest. Additionally, altar usage, saint veneration, and intercessional activities of spirits (deceased saints), represented in principles 9 and 10 were traditional Spiritualist doctrinal elements integrated into this group's doctrinal framework. Although some Spiritualist traditional beliefs were maintained, doctrinal points of departure took this group in a different direction. This departure primarily, as a stated earlier, surrounded the explicit incorporation of Christianity in the Spiritualist doctrine, a move made apparent in the majority of the group's sixteen declarations. Christ was the cornerstone of their doctrinal system. Such a Christological emphasis was an explicit shift from the early days of Spiritualist churches in New Orleans when the name of Jesus was not used within these same spaces. Zora Neale Hurston discussed the use of Jesus name in Mother Anderson's

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<sup>209</sup> It must be noted that some of these declarations have been abbreviated. For a full list of each declaration see "Divine Spiritualist Church of the Southwest Meets," *The Louisiana Weekly*, 13 February 1937, 5.

church. In *Hoodoo in America*, Hurston stated, “Mother Anderson’s followers are not allowed to call the name of Jesus. The reason given is that Jesus as a man was not important—he was merely the earthly body of a nameless ‘Spirit’ by which name the deity is always addressed.”<sup>210</sup> Thus, the spirit embodied by Jesus was seen as divine, not Jesus. Jesus, both in name and function, was of no or little consequence in the doctrinal/ritualistic activities of Mothers Anderson, Catherine, Kate, and Hyde, instead, spiritual guides like Black Hawk and Father Joseph, the spirit of Jehovah, St. Michael, and God “as” Spirit, respectively, served as focal points in these early mothers Spiritualist systems of belief. Their Christianity, therefore, was not premised upon belief in the divinity of Jesus but on the sacredness associated with the “Spirit” that he embodied while on Earth. However, for members of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest, Christ was an essential part of the Trinitarian doctrine (principle 1); served as the securer and vessel of salvation (principle 6); issued ordinance concerning acceptable sacraments (principle 14); and lastly, Jesus Christ established the church as one that was “spiritual” (principle 8). Members of this group sought to bring about a sense of *respectability* to Spiritualist churches through “divinizing” its doctrinal framework. As the group stated in their annual convention of 1938, the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest sought to “organize the Spiritualist faith as a uniform religion and not as a cult.”<sup>211</sup> Hence, the doctrinal framework of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest represented a movement away from what was seen

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<sup>210</sup> Hurston, “Hoodoo in America,” 319.

<sup>211</sup> Claude F. Jacobs and Andrew J. Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans: Origins, Beliefs, and Rituals of an African-American Religion* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 46. The original source of this excerpt is found in a *Louisiana Weekly* article, 23 July 1938.

as individualized, cult-like tenets of Spiritualism as practiced by early mothers towards a more collective, uniform mode of “Divine Spiritualism” that was Christian in orientation.

### **Archbishop E. J. Johnson and Archbishop Lydia Gilford: The Emergence of New Spiritualist Associations**

In August 1942, Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest under the leadership of Bishop Thomas Watson merged with Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ (headquartered in Kansas City) to form the United Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ (United Metropolitan).<sup>212</sup> Creation of the largest African American Spiritualist association was one of the primary motives driving the merger. The merger also served as a means to assist Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ with their financial woes. Specifically, “the Southwest organization had saved the considerable assets of Metropolitan (estimated by some people to have been between one and two million dollars) from reverting to the family of the late Bishop William Taylor, who founded the Kansas City association in 1925.”<sup>213</sup> Despite these benefits, the merger was short lived. This unsuccessful merger along with theological disagreements regarding gender roles in leadership positions were factors that would lead to several other schisms of Universal Metropolitan. The first division resulted from Bishop Watson’s decision to exclude

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<sup>212</sup> Notice the usage of the term “Spiritual” instead of “Spiritualist.” This shift occurs in New Orleans during the 1940s as opposed to some groups in the mid-west like Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ that made this transition much earlier, some as early as 1925. In an interview with Archbishop Johnson, he speaks about the reason for this shift to the use of “Spiritual.” He states, “Now, ‘spiritual’ means somebody that is spiritual minded, or spiritually gifted, or spiritually uplifted. There’s no such thing in the Bible as ‘spiritualist.’ It’s ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirit’ and things as that.” Therefore, for him the distinction between the two terms is premised upon motives and source usage, which for Spiritual people involves doing good works and utilizing the Bible, respectively. For the full interview of Archbishop Johnson and one given by another leader in the Spiritual churches named Bishop Jules Anderson in regard to the distinction of these terms see, Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 16-17.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 47.

women from the association's bishopric. Therefore, he demoted B. S. Johnson from Bishop to Reverend Mother Senior. Bishop B. S. Johnson and Mother Mamie Reason—female leaders who helped established the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest—left the association because of its new policy of gender discrimination.<sup>214</sup> Although United Metropolitan still maintained a strong following in regard to various Spiritualist orders, the structural and theological initiatives taken by Bishop Thomas would led to the lost of another leader who was instrumental in the establishment of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest, Bishop Ernest. J. Johnson (later ordained as Archbishop in 1979).

*Archbishop Ernest J. Johnson and Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ*<sup>215</sup>

Archbishop Johnson was not only a founding member of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest, but he also maintained an allegiance to the organization through both a failed merger and a theological dispute concerning women in leadership roles. However, a major dispute over bishopric roles and assignments led Archbishop Johnson to sever his ties with the organization. Archbishop Johnson discussed the details of this separation in an interview with anthropologists Claude F. Jacobs and Andrew J. Kaslow:

We started the organization [Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ] in '51. I was belonging to another organization which was the United Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ... We were under Bishop Watson... I had been with him ten or twelve years, or better. We only had that one Bishop at the time, and that was him. So, a lot of the members got together and wanted him to consecrate me as a bishop. Say in case something happened

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<sup>214</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 46. It is important to note that Mother Mamie Reason was the first person to leave the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest.

<sup>215</sup> The term “Spiritual” will be used throughout the remainder of this chapter where appropriate. The term “Spiritualist” will be used to describe the early activities of the movement. Refer to note 44 for the distinction between the two terms.



to him, we'd have somebody else to take over. I refused for about three years, of accepting the bishopric. So they talked me into doing it ... And it worked out alright a couple of years and he gave me a district. The district was out in Pennsylvania, New York, all out the way. That part of the country was practically organized already, you know. Didn't need too much organizing out there. So, that's where the conflict came about. Something he wanted me to do and I didn't think it was right. So, I just refused to do it, and that brought about the split between us.<sup>216</sup>

This interview highlighted instrumental changes occurring during the Spiritualist movement of New Orleans during the 1940s through the early 1950s. The structural framework of the United Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ no longer possessed a secondary bishop position—a role previously occupied by Bishop B. S. Johnson before the merger. This eradication of the secondary bishop position and the failed merger with Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ made Bishop Watson the sole leader of United Metropolitan, which by 1942 was a national organization with churches in Louisiana, Indiana, Oklahoma, California, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania. Despite the growth of United Metropolitan, structural rigidity of the organization and leadership style of Bishop Watson, served as catalysts that “brought about the split” of Archbishop Johnson from an organization that he helped establish in 1936. Archbishop Johnson would go on to form Israel Universal, a national association of Spiritual churches that still exists today.

As previously stated, Archbishop Johnson founded Israel Universal in 1951. Israelite Divine Spiritual Church (known by adherents as “Israelite”), a Spiritual church he started in 1929, served as the mother church for this newly established organization. Little is known about the activities of Israel Universal from its inception up through the 1970s. However, by 1982, Israel Divine under the leadership of its founder Archbishop

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<sup>216</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 46-47.

Johnson had become a national organization with churches in Louisiana, Ohio, Texas, Arkansas, Illinois, and Michigan. See Table 3.

**Table 3: Spiritual Churches Belonging to Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ<sup>217</sup>**

<b>Name of Church</b>	<b>Location (state)</b>	<b>Pastor</b>
Israelite Divine Spiritual Church, No. 1 (mother church)	Louisiana	Ernest J. Johnson
Guiding Star Spiritual Church	Louisiana	Mary Andrews
Israelite Divine Spiritual Church, No. 2	Louisiana	L. O. Fields
St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1	Louisiana	Herman Brown
Evening Star Spiritual Church	Louisiana	A. Jackson
Faith in God Temple	Louisiana	L. Jones
Good Shepherd Divine Spiritual Church	Ohio	Marvin Johnson
McGowen Memorial Spiritual Temple, No. 1	Texas	C. Turner
Antioch Spiritual Church, No. 1	Louisiana	Oscar Francis
St. Anthony Spiritual Church of Christ	Louisiana	Ida Reeves
Israelite Spiritual Church, No. 6	Louisiana	Loretta Hall
Sacred Heart Divine Spiritual Church	Louisiana	Ruby Waxter
Universal Prayer Room	n/a	Alberta Truehill
St. James, The Free Churches of God of in Christ	Ohio	C. R. Blythe
Calvary Spiritual Church of Christ	Louisiana	Alice Robonson
Christian Rest Spiritual Church	Louisiana	Daisy Harper
Israelite Blessed Mother Spiritual Church	Louisiana	L. Parker
St. Anthony Divine Spiritual Church	Louisiana	A. Johnson
St. Mary's House of Prayer	Ohio	S. Sanders
King Solomon's Spiritual Baptist Church	Louisiana	Gerladine Turner
Queen of Sheba Miracle Temple	Louisiana	Naioma Bobbs
St. Michael and St. Anthony Prayer Room	Louisiana	S. Watkin
Greater Jeremiah Spiritual Church of Christ	Arkansas	Roscoe Robertson
King Solomon's Holy House of Prayer	Illinois	Bobby Jones
Israelite Spiritual Church, No. 5	Louisiana	M. Sique
St. Jude Spiritual Church	Louisiana	D. D. Garden
St. Philomena Spiritual Baptist	Louisiana	E. Mendoza
Jesus Prayer Mission	Louisiana	M. Spotson

<sup>217</sup> Information appearing in this table was drawn from a "Souvenir Program of Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ" that was given to members at the association's 1982 national conference. This program was retrieved from, The Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center, New Orleans.

Blue Star Spiritual Church	Michigan	William Stokes
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This table not only illustrates the growth of Israel Universal under the leadership of Archbishop Johnson, but it also shows the resilience of women in the Spiritual movement during this period for almost half of these churches were started and led by women. Furthermore, unlike his former Spiritual co-worker, Bishop Watson, Archbishop Johnson recognized the ordination of women into the bishopric. Photographer Michael P. Smith captured Archbishop Johnson's allowance of women into one of the highest levels of leadership in the Spiritual faith. See Figure 9a and 9b.<sup>218</sup>



Ordination of Bishops, Israelite S.C. 1982

2227/17

Figure 9a



Ordination of Bishop Aletha Jones, Israelite 1982

211/29

Figure 9b

**Figures 9a-b:** These photos taken by Michael P. Smith captures ordinations of women into the bishopric. They were performed by Archbishop Johnson during the early 1980s. Figure 9a and 9b also illustrates the elaborate rituals associated with such a vertical movement in Israel Divine. New Orleans, 1982/1983.

The 1982 national convention souvenir booklet list several women who served in this particular capacity. They were Bishops Ida Reeves, Lydia Gilford, Aubrey Small, Inez Adams, Edmonia Cadwell, Cleopatrck Henderson, and Alfreta Dixon. Bishop Ida Reeves was the only female bishop whose church was located outside of New Orleans; the remainder of the bishops took up residences in New Orleans and pastored Spiritual churches within the city. Israel Universal also possessed an elaborate system, including

<sup>218</sup> Michael P. Smith, *Spirit World: Pattern in the Expressive Folk Culture of Afro-American New Orleans* (New Orleans: Gambit Publications, 1984), 62, photos.

a(n) executive board, board of directors, Bishop's council (many of the female bishops served on this level of organization), ministers' board, missionary board, women's auxiliary, program/public relations committee, brotherhood auxiliary, and steward board.<sup>219</sup> The executive board was responsible for "reviewing all procedural matters related to the functioning of the national organization or of the individual churches," while the Bishop's council played the role of check and balance.<sup>220</sup> The putting in place of such a multidimensional organizational structure by Archbishop Johnson would improve the chances of the association's survival even after his death, a notion of security that he professed was missing from United Metropolitan.

Archbishop Johnson, in addition to implementing an organizational structure that included both men/women on every level, re-integrated doctrinal/ritual elements that were introduced by early mothers of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans. The recognition of Black Hawk as a spiritual guide served as an example of Archbishop Johnson's continuation of a doctrinal principle initiated by Mother Anderson in the early 1920s. Although many Spiritual churches in New Orleans had eliminated public recognition of this spiritual guide, Archbishop Johnson professed the importance of Black Hawk to his adherents in Israelite, mother church of the Israel Universal association. He shared with the members that

The spirit of Black Hawk is not an enemy. He's a brother, as all the spirits of God are, working to save men's souls. We're not praying to him. We're honoring him. God says give honor where honor is due. There are many men and women due honor tonight. He said to honor the magistrate, which is the judge, the lawyer, the policeman. Honor these because they are supposed to be protecting you and protecting me. With all that protection, still

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<sup>219</sup> "Souvenir Program of Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ," The Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center, New Orleans.

<sup>220</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 188.

Satan has gone wild. But, I want you, you, and you to know: spirit of God is your friend. He will help you to go through this unfriendly, evil land. And he's a wonderful *spirit guide*. And if you ask God to acquaint you with him, he will do just that. (emphasis added)<sup>221</sup>

Archbishop Johnson's address to the congregation involved solidifying the identity and purpose of Black Hawk to the Spiritual churches. Black Hawk is "not an enemy," instead Archbishop Johnson recognized him as "a friend," "a spirit of God," and "a wonderful spirit guide." Recognition of Black Hawk as a spiritual guide paralleled Mother Anderson's perception of him. Mother Anderson, however, did not explicitly recognize Black Hawk as a spirit of God. This correlation served as the implementation of divine Spiritualism—Christianization of Spiritualist doctrinal creeds—that took root in New Orleans with the formation of the Divine Spiritualist Churches of the Southwest during the late 1930s. Black Hawk's purpose, according to Archbishop Johnson, was to protect adherents. Like "magistrates" of the civil government Black Hawk ensured protection of adherents within the earthly realm or on this "evil land"; however, unlike these civil servants, Black Hawk protected adherents from evil spiritual forces like Satan.

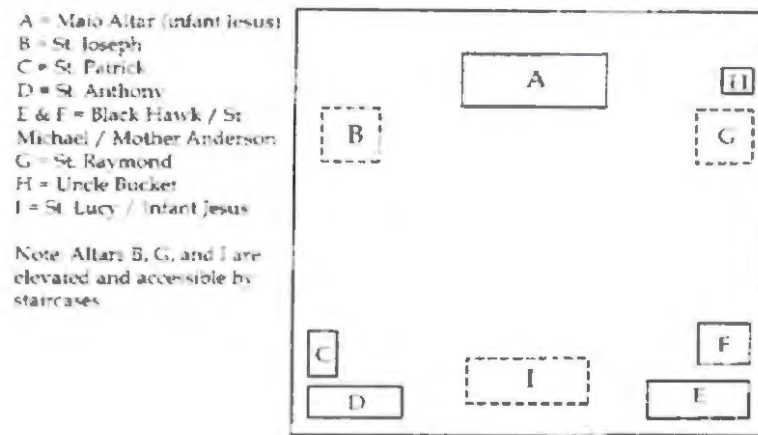
In addition to this recognition of Black Hawk as a spiritual guide, Archbishop Johnson also re-enforced the important role of altars within the rich tradition of Spiritual churches of New Orleans. For him, the "altar is a sacred and divine place [where Spiritual adherents] pour out complaints and receive the blessings of God."<sup>222</sup> Therefore, following in the footsteps of Mothers Anderson, Catherine, Kate, and Hyde, Archbishop Johnson

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<sup>221</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 142-143. For more information concerning the retention of Black Hawk as a spiritual guide in New Orleans see, Jason Berry, *The Spirit of Black Hawk: A Mystery of Africans and Indians* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).

<sup>222</sup> Israel Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ, *Discipline of the Israel Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ*, 1953, quoted in Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 65.

filled the interior space of the mother church, Israelite, with elaborate altars. In 1998, anthropologist Stephen Wehmeyer catalogued each of these altars that still remained during the late 1990s. See Figure 10.<sup>223</sup>



**Figure 10:** The schematic drawing of the interior space of Israelite Divine Spiritual Church located at 3000 Frenchman Street in the Tremé district of New Orleans.

For Wehmeyer, “to step through the sanctuary doors at Israelite [was] to find oneself completely surrounded by images of the divine.”<sup>224</sup> Specifically, nine ornate, strategically placed altars represented these divine images. Each of these altars served as a concrete dedication to saints and spiritual guides that could be worked—process of arousing the saints/guides—by believers to obtain favors. For instance, saints represented by the elevated altars of St. Lucy/Infant Jesus, St. Joseph, and St. Raymond, granted triumph in earthly challenges, answered intercessory prayers, and ensured financial prosperity, respectively, to those believers who stood before them in reverence. The spirit of Uncle symbolized by the Uncle Bucket altar offered liberation, economic security, success in

<sup>223</sup> Stephen Wehmeyer, “Indians at the Door,” 32.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 31.

civil cases, and satisfaction in the performance of “rootwork.”<sup>225</sup> Adherents work the St. Anthony altar to recover lost items for he is the patron saint of those lost/stolen objects. Petitions before the St. Michael/Black Hawk altars release power, victory, and protection for the former symbolized the archangel that fought believers’ battles and the latter served as the watchman on the wall, protecting those that petitioned his guidance. These altars not only served as focal points in the doctrinal framework and ritual activities of the mother church, but they also operated in these same capacities in other churches within the Israel Universal. For example, the spiritual guide Yellow Jacket was honored with an altar in St. Daniel’s Spiritual Church. An elaborate altar dedicated to the spiritual guide Queen Esther stood in Bishop Inez Adams’ Queen Esther Divine Spiritual Temple. To this end, the inclusion of doctrinal and ritualistic elements implemented by early Spiritualist mothers in the form of ritual activities for spiritual guides like Black Hawk and altars dedicated to both spiritual guides and patron saints became explicit markers of Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ under the leadership of Archbishop Johnson.

Although Archbishop Johnson maintained some Spiritual traditions, he was responsible for the implementation of fresh doctrinal material into the Spiritual movement. One such doctrine was the power of the mind. For Archbishop Johnson the mind was central in the achievement of health and balance, but this same mind, if blocked, would lead to the negation of positive manifestations in the life of an individual.

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<sup>225</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 115. There is no evidence of whether this rootwork involved the insurance of good or evil. The interpretation of the term remains open. Only the adherent that stands before the “pail” offers a meaning behind the intention of this “work.”

He discussed in detail the mind's power in a manual that he compiled called *The Twelfth Hour Mediator*:

Know that Thought is supreme, that Ideas rule the world, that no man is essentially better than the thoughts he entertains...To improve your circumstances, you must first enlarge your consciousness and increase your knowledge. Learn to use your powers of Thought and of creative imagination ("the Divine Faculties of the human mind") for the achievement of all worthy desires. Therefore, train your mind to know and use its own powers. Heal yourself,—and others. Harmful thoughts and emotions are reflected by inharmonious conditions of the physical body. "Mind not only makes sick, it also cures." You can heal yourself and others, when you fully understand why Divine Healing is the result of definite and un-failing laws, and that Healing does not come from without, but from within man.<sup>226</sup>

The power to "think" maintained a position of sovereignty in this manual distributed to members of Israelite. The mind possessed the ability to rule the world. The mind held the key to power, achievement, and last but not least healing for self as well as others. Power could only be ascertained through the "enlargement of one's consciousness," an expansion that occurred as the result of an apprehension of knowledge. Knowledge unblocks the mind in such a way that the adherent can tap into his/her ability to creatively imagine their healing, for, according to Archbishop Johnson, the use of this "divine faculty of the human mind" affords the individual the power to exercise "Divine Healing." In this way, healing as initiated by positive thoughts and emotions results in a restoration "not from without, but [one] from within man." This mantra of mind power as displayed in *The Twelfth Hour Mediator* along with the re-institutionalization of doctrinal/ritual frameworks from earlier periods of the movement by Archbishop Johnson and the churches of Israel Universal, respectively, served to further enlarge the diverse terrain of the Spiritual churches in the Crescent City.

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<sup>226</sup> E. J. Johnson, *The Twelfth Hour Mediator*, informally published, quoted in Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 160-161.



*Archbishop Lydia Beatrice Gilford and Infant Jesus of Prague Spiritual Church*

Archbishop Lydia Beatrice Gilford entered into New Orleans Spiritualism at the age of twenty-one. She remained within this faith until her death in 1989.<sup>227</sup> In 1950, she became a member of St. Anthony Divine Spiritual Temple of Christ (St. Anthony Divine). Her gifts of spiritual healing and prophecy were recognized and nurtured by Bishop Wilbert Hawkins, the pastor of St. Anthony Divine. Archbishop Gilford, under the tutelage of Bishop Hawkins, quickly ascended through the ranks within the Spiritual church. She moved from missionary to evangelist and from evangelist to minister in a relatively short period of time. Because St. Anthony Divine was a member of United Metropolitan, Bishop Watson, who still served as the organization's senior bishop, ordained her. She was an active minister in both St. Anthony Divine and United Metropolitan until 1966 when she received her "call" to start an independent Spiritual church. In a candid interview with David Estes, Archbishop Gilford provided intimate details about this "Spiritual" calling:

I was very, very sick. I was low sick. You ever seen they call all the family members in and they—screen go round your bed? And all the people was around there and everything. And the spirit spoke. Said if your take and put your shampoo—your altar over your shampoo bowl and do what God tell you to do, put your Marcel irons down and your straightening comb down, do what God tell you to you shall be healed. I say what? Uh-huh, I'll do just that. And open you a church and name it Infant Jesus of Prague. And now that's what I did....[Then] told them [to] move my altar. I have one girl was staying with me. Wash me and bathe me and give me my food and everything. First member in Infant Jesus. I say move this altar and put it over that shampoo bowl...And she did just that. And then I commenced to get up.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Archbishop Gilford was introduced to the Spiritual church by her mother, who was Catholic but open to the Spiritual faith. See Smith, *Spirit World*, 52-53.

<sup>228</sup> David C. Estes, "Preaching in an Afro-American Spiritual Church: Archbishop Lydia Gilford and the Traditional Chanted Sermon," in *Cultural Perspectives on the American*

Archbishop Gilford's "call" narrative began with a statement of her physical condition; specifically, she shared with the interviewer that she was "low sick." It was in the midst of this illness that the "spirit spoke" directly to her. This spirit, according to Archbishop Gilford, provided her with a means in which to apprehend physical healing. She was instructed by the spirit to place her "altar over the shampoo bowl." As a full-time beautician, Archbishop Gilford believed that her profession would have to become secondary to her commitment to God in order to not only receive physical restoration, but also to receive spiritual power necessary to open her own church. And, on that day, Archbishop Gilford was "commenced to rally and commenced to get up" and form Infant Jesus of Prague Spiritual Church, an independent Spiritual church that would not hold allegiance to any Spiritual association.

Infant Jesus of Prague was located in the Lower Garden District at the intersection of Religious and Orange Streets. This church, with its white stucco exterior and large painted murals of Infant Jesus, St. Michael, and St. George, stood out in this dim warehouse district that contained only a few homes and one church—a Baptist church located just across the street from Infant Jesus of Prague. Unlike the dimness of these surroundings, the interior space of Archbishop Gilford's church was filled with singing, dancing, preaching, and shouting. Infant Jesus of Prague, as a Spiritual church, was the place where individuals could feel comfortable releasing spiritual forces. For Archbishop Gilford, her church was one defined by spiritual freedom. In her words, "when you feel like dancing, you dance; when you feel like shouting, you shout; when you feel the

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*South: Volume 5 (Religion)*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1991), 82.

visitation of the spirit, you do whatever you feel like doing and its alright.”<sup>229</sup> Although this freedom to spiritually vent served as a primary attractant, the various ways in which Archbishop Gilford empowered individuals also attracted many people to Infant Jesus of Prague. As one member stated, “[Archbishop Gilford] taught me that I can talk to the Lord for myself...I learned I have a spirit and it made me feel alive...It made me feel like I was somebody. It made me feel like I had a voice that someone was gonna hear me.”<sup>230</sup> In this way, Archbishop Gilford followed in the footsteps of early Spiritualist mothers that had gone before her. Like Mother Anderson, she taught and showed the individual how to tap into spiritual dimensions. Like Mother Hyde, she instructed her members on the spiritual power of the individual and how this power provided an outlet in which the person could directly commune with God. And, with this sense of empowerment, members such as the one quoted above apprehended a “somebodiness,” which made them feel alive.

During the 1970s and 1980s, this notion of self-empowerment would become the hallmark of Archbishop Gilford’s ministry, particularly manifested in her efforts to increase the participatory roles of women and children in Infant Jesus of Prague in particular and Spiritual churches in general. Concerning women, she adamantly spoke against gender discrimination in both non-Spiritual and Spiritual churches. For example, Archbishop Gilford spoke against the refusal of a Baptist church to recognize her as a minister during an appreciation service that she attended. She openly shared her reaction to this gender-induced opposition from her pulpit one Sunday. She stated, “When I went over to Good Shepherd today, I know’d my place. I know’d my place was not in the

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<sup>229</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 53.

<sup>230</sup> Estes, “African American Women and Contested Spirituality,” 163.

pew...I know'd my place was supposed to be in the rostrum, and if you don't like me in the rostrum, hit the door."<sup>231</sup> Archbishop Gilford reminded her members the importance of knowing their place and remaining steadfast in that position, even if it meant "hitting the door." She would go on to say, "The men that don't women in their pulpit is very much afraid. They're afraid that the women are gonna shake 'em up."<sup>232</sup> During this verbal protest against how she was treated in the Baptist church, a shift occurred in regard to the intended audience. Initially, Archbishop Guilford addressed her entire congregation concerning this matter; however, she turned her attention towards her female members. And, in this shift, she identified the source of gender discrimination, which for her was fear. Archbishop Gilford's commitment to gender equality in ecclesiastical space also led her to create her own Spiritual association called Infant Jesus of Prague Spiritual Church of Christ National Conference. Although Archbishop Johnson recognized and ordained women, the movement of women into higher roles of the bishopric, including bishop and archbishop positions, occurred at a slower rate than those of men. Therefore, both through Infant Jesus of Prague and her newly formed organization, those "called" women were freely ordained in the Spiritual church. Spiritual men in leadership positions responses varied from one of negativity, Bishop Watson, to one of support, Archbishop Johnson. Regardless of the male reactions to the aggressive placement of women in leadership positions by Archbishop Gilford, female adherents within her church and association responded in the affirmative. Such affirmation was captured in an interview with Reverend Sylavinia Roach, a minister of Infant Jesus of Prague ordained by Archbishop Guilford. "In [this] Spiritual church a woman just have a voice...And she's

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<sup>231</sup> Estes, "African American Women and Contested Spirituality," 176.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

heard. And it's so good to hear a woman's viewpoint because we've been sitting down so long."<sup>233</sup> Archbishop Gilford this way like Mothers Anderson, Catherine, Kate, and Hyde, used Infant Jesus of Prague and her association as platforms where women could find and express their voices within the Spiritual churches in New Orleans.

Not only did Archbishop Gilford confront gender discrimination in ecclesiastical spaces, but she also provided a place where the Spiritual calling of children could be accepted, expressed, and nourished. Michael Smith recognized her attentiveness to children within Infant Jesus of Prague:

I was particularly impressed by her way of working with children. In Bishop Gilford's church children are raised to be seen and heard. I saw small children, no more than five or six years of age, get up and speak with conviction, to large groups like adults. Sometimes even smaller children were held up to the microphone and allowed to speak...children were respected and allowed to be children.<sup>234</sup>

Much like Zora Neale Hurston's observations of children in Mother Catherine's Manger, Smith shared with his readers the place that children maintained in Infant Jesus of Prague.<sup>235</sup> In this Spiritual place, children were both "seen" and "heard." The adults of the church respected each of their voices. The children, as a result of this type of nurturing environment, could stand before the adults with confidence and "speak with conviction." Infant Jesus of Prague not only served as a space where children were treated as equal members, but this church also recognized the Spiritual gifts, which included calls into the ministry, of children. In a sermon entitled, "A Wonderful Counselor," Archbishop Gilford in her discussion of the ministerial structure of the Spiritual church stated a case for the participation of children in this capacity. She

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<sup>233</sup> Estes, "Preaching in an Afro-American Spiritual Church," 81.

<sup>234</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 50.

<sup>235</sup> Hurston, "Mother Catherine," 25.

exclaimed, “Don’t care who delivering the word; come out of the mouth of babes and sucklings; the eighth division of Psalms tells it to us that the baby *there* can tell me thus say the Lord. (emphasis added)”<sup>236</sup> For Archbishop Gilford, any vessel could be used to deliver the word of the Lord, including “babes” and “sucklings.” She moved this possible participatory role of children in the ministry beyond an opinion by offering Scripture (Psalm 8) as evidentiary support and an infant member of the congregation as an illustrative point. Her commitment to the inclusion of children in leadership position could be heard from the pulpit, but could be seen in the interior spaces. Photographer Michael P. Smith, for example, captured these activities during the late 70s and early 80s.<sup>237</sup> See Figures 11-13.



**Figure 11:** Baptism of an elderly woman at Infant Jesus of Prague by Archbishop Gilford (right) and an assistant minister (left). New Orleans, n.d. Photo: Michael P. Smith.



**Figure 12:** Children are “slain in the spirit” during their ordination service at Infant Jesus of Prague. New Orleans, 1975. Photo: Michael P. Smith.

<sup>236</sup> Estes, “African American Women and Contested Spirituality,” 177.

<sup>237</sup> Michael P. Smith, “Michael P. Smith Photography Collection,” The Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center, New Orleans.



**Figure 13:** Bishops and ministers “lay hands” on the heads of young girls during the ordination of junior missionaries at Infant Jesus of Prague. New Orleans, 1997.  
Photo: Michael P. Smith.

Children of all ages participated in the leadership ranks of Infant Jesus of Prague. They served as ordained ministers, endorsed with the authority to assist in the baptism of members (figure 11). They possessed the freedom, in the words of Archbishop Gilford, “to vent the spirit forces,” (figure 12) which erupted in spiritually induced dancing and fainting during their ordination into the church’s ministerial ranks. Surrounded by other mothers at ministerial and bishopric ranks, young female children were crowned as junior missionaries of the Spiritual faith (figure 13). The youth of Infant Jesus of Prague were not confined to the pews, but were granted opportunities to fully participate in every dimension of this Spiritual church. To this end, Archbishop Gilford’s Infant Jesus of Prague served as a Spiritual sounding board for persons, especially women and children, whose voices were quite often silenced in the larger society.

Infant Jesus of Prague, in addition to being a sounding board for marginalized people, represented a repository for the two primary tenants of healing and prophecy that

were the hallmark of the Spiritual tradition in New Orleans. Archbishop Gilford held healing and prophecy services on Tuesday and Saturday nights. During these services, healings were carried out through healers who had been identified by Archbishop Gilford. These healers, according to her, possessed a distinctive mark on their foreheads that the spirit revealed to the archbishop. Spiritual healing was not a gift to be taken lightly for Archbishop Gilford warns those “marked” with the sign of healing that this gift demands sacrifice, which sometimes required the individual to “sacrifice family life and world commitment.” Here, Archbishop Gilford’s admonishment echoes Mother Kate’s words to one of her co-workers that spiritual healers are like doctors who “must give service all hours of the night.”<sup>238</sup> Healers at Infant Prague not only had to be readily available, but they also understood their place in regard to the process of healing. For healers were trained by Archbishop Gilford to know that healing occurred by way of the direct action of the spirits of God flowing indirectly through their physical body.

Likewise prophecy in Infant Jesus of Prague was recognized as an embodied action of spiritual forces. Those with this spiritual gift received specific instructions from Archbishop Gilford. For her the reception of prophetic utterances involved “ask[ing] God to strip you of your *self*, set your mind blank, so that the Lord can command you.”<sup>239</sup> Prophecy demanded the removal of self in a way that the individual’s consciousness was clear. This mental “blankness” served as a tabula rasa awaiting the words of the “spirit of the Lord or other spiritual forces.”<sup>240</sup> Archbishop Gilford maintained that this usage of a

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<sup>238</sup> See Robert McKinney, “Mother Kate Francis Has Returned Already: Co-Workers Agree,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229), 5.

<sup>239</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 57.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.



blank conscious did not allow any form of retention of behalf of the prophetic vessel and that confirmation of one's prophetic abilities depended on confirmation of individuals that "came back to give adoration to the spirit" because the word given by the prophet became a manifested reality.<sup>241</sup> In addition to the continuation of prophecy and healing, Archbishop Gilford's Infant Jesus of Prague honored patron saints like St. Raymond and St. Michael and spiritual guides like Black Hawk through feasts and special ritualistic services. Archbishop Gilford in this way not only continued traditions established throughout the life of Spiritual churches in New Orleans, but also her commitment to nurturing self-empowerment in women and children during the 1970s and 1980s further solidified her contribution to this same Spiritual legacy.

#### **New Orleans Spiritual Churches From 1990 Through the Turn of the Century**

During the mid- to late 1980s, approximately fifty Spiritual churches were holding services in New Orleans. Most of these churches were located in the lower ninth ward area. Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ and United Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ were still the major Spiritual associations headquartered in the Crescent City. However, the mother church of the latter (St. Joseph Helping Hand Divine Spiritual Church of Christ) and St. Expedite Spiritual Church, under the leadership of Thomas Benjamin Watson, would undergo a significant doctrinal shift by 1995. The grandson of Bishop Watson, co-founder of United Metropolitan, combined both churches and shifted this unified ecclesiastical body away from a Spiritual doctrinal belief system towards a non-denominational teaching ministry that he considered to be

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<sup>241</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 57.

more biblically sound.<sup>242</sup> Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries was formed as a direct result of this doctrinal shift. This severing of ties between the mother church and United Metropolitan would leave Israel Universal as the only active Spiritual association in New Orleans. The churches of Israel Universal, during the 1990s through the turn of the century, remained committed to the maintenance of doctrinal principles and ritualistic activities that were characteristic of the Spiritual churches of New Orleans from their inception in 1920. Concerning the former, public/private healings and prophetic utterances were still actively administered. For example, anthropologist Stephen Wehmeyer served as a participant-observer in a public healing ritual that took place at Israelite in 1998.<sup>243</sup> Wehmeyer described his and Spiritual members' participation in this ritual:

As church members pass by these altars, they knock resoundingly three times on each one, honoring the saints and rousing them to action. We circle under St. Raymond, passed the main altar again, and continued our march...Bishop [Coleman] leads us back into our circle. One by one we smoke our feet in the column of swirling incense, then brush the smoke over our heads and hands, and along our arms. We clasp hands again, eyes and faces shining through the smoke.<sup>244</sup>

Here, Wehmeyer highlighted Spiritual(ist) principles passed down from earlier leaders—altar usage, saint veneration, and arousal of spirits through human action

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<sup>242</sup> This transition is recorded in the “about us” section of the association website. The historical narrative explains the transition as one that was fueled by Pastor Watson’s “great concern that the doctrine of the spiritual church was in conflict with sound biblical foundations.” Therefore, his grandfather’s attempt to legitimize the Spiritual belief system through the explicit integration of Christianity during the 1940s (Divine Spiritualism) was not strong enough to prevent this transition. See “About Us,” Watson Memorial Teaching Ministers, accessed February 1, 2011, <http://www.dkwmultimedia.com/watson/Discover.html>.

<sup>243</sup> This ritual primarily consisted of processional marching and altar knocking. Wehmeyer called this ritual a “Power on Parade.” See Wehmeyer, “Indians at the Door,” 33-34.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, 34.

(knocking/burning incense). Concerning the latter, spiritual activities such as feasts and rituals to honor patron saints and spiritual guides could be found in the associations' Spiritual churches. For instance, in 1994, historian Jason Berry in his work *The Spirit of Black* observes Israelite's annual Black Hawk service, a ritual celebrated yearly in the mother church since its inception by Archbishop Johnson in 1929.<sup>245</sup> Not only did Israel Universal as an active body of churches maintain New Orleans Spiritual legacy in doctrinal and ritual forms, but this association also continued to solidify its standing as a thriving national Spiritual association. By 2000, Israel Universal counted twenty-eight Spiritual churches among its membership—including approximately thirty churches in Louisiana, Michigan, Arkansas, Illinois, and Texas.<sup>246</sup> In 2004, there were about thirty Spiritual churches in New Orleans; half of these churches were affiliated with Israel Universal. Such numbers indicated the continuing presence of Spiritual churches eighty-four years after their origin; however, in 2005, a catastrophic event would altar the geography of the Spiritual churches in New Orleans.

### **New Orleans Spiritual Churches After Hurricane Katrina**

"I'm glad that he did not see it," was the statement made by Archbishop William Stokes during an interview concerning Archbishop Johnson's death in 2004, approximately one year before Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf coast.<sup>247</sup> Archbishop Stokes was relieved that one of the patriarchs of Spiritual churches missed the death, displacement, and damage caused by Hurricane Katrina's storm surge. The former was appreciative that

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<sup>245</sup> Berry, *The Spirit of Black Hawk*, 1995.

<sup>246</sup> Israel Universal Spiritual Churches of Christ, "Category Association Church: 2000-2001," July 20, 2000, 1-2.

<sup>247</sup> William E. Stokes, interviewed by Margarita Simon Guillory, telephone interview, 1 February, 2011, Houston, TX.

the latter missed the breeching of the levees. These multiple breeches unleashed waters that would flood over seventy-five percent of New Orleans. The Lower Ninth Ward was the hardest hit area in the city. Massive flooding in this area had a direct affect on Spiritual churches, mainly because over eighty percent of them were located in the lower ninth ward. Members were displaced, and their churches filled with water. What remained of their churches after induced-drainage were infrastructures fit only for demolition. See figures 14-15.<sup>248</sup>



**Figure 14:** Archbishop Stokes and Bishop Daniel Jackson inspects the remains of Queen Esther Spiritual Church. New Orleans, 2010. Photo: Margarita Guillory.



**Figure 15:** Antioch Spiritual Church (right) and the home (left) of its pastor, Bishop Oscar Francis. New Orleans, 2010. Photo: Margarita Guillory.

Queen Esther Spiritual Church and Antioch Spiritual Church, founded by Bishop Inez Adam and Reverend Alfred and Mother Louise Washington, respectively, were ecclesiastical fixtures within the lower ninth ward for over forty years. However, they presently stand stagnant, a symbolic manifestation of Hurricane Katrina's devastation.

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<sup>248</sup> Margarita Simon Guillory, "Queen Esther Spiritual Church" and "Antioch Spiritual Church," 2010, photos.

One church is marked for demolition (figure 14), while the other remains abandoned. These two churches—both members of Archbishop Johnson’s Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ—represent only a few Spiritual churches that remain standing in the lower ninth ward in July 2010.

Due to severe structural damages to Spiritual church buildings and the displacement of a large majority of “Spiritual people”—name used to designate members of Spiritual churches—brought on by Hurricane Katrina, there are now only two active Spiritual churches in New Orleans. Israelite Divine Spiritual Church (mother church of Israel Universal) and Antioch Spiritual Church have weathered the storm. Both Spiritual bodies remain committed to the maintenance and propagation of the Spiritual tradition that originated with Mother Leafy Anderson over ninety years ago.

Israelite remains at 3000 Frenchman Street. Because of its location, the structure of the church was spared from the damaging affects of Hurricane Katrina. Despite the displacement of many of its members, one year after the storm, many returned and services resumed at Israelite. Currently, Israelite is under the leadership of Bishop William Wilson, who was appointed to this position by Archbishop Johnson before his death. The main altar (“Throne of Grace”) and altars dedicated to Sts. Lucy, Joseph, and Raymond still adorn Israelite’s interior. However, altars honoring Uncle Bucket, Black Hawk/St. Michael, St. Patrick and St. Anthony no longer grace the interior space of this Spiritual sanctuary. Some traditional rituals are still carried out at Israelite. For example, a modified version of the Candle Drill occurs near the end of noon services at Israelite.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> I observed this ritual during a Sunday service at Israelite on July 25, 2010. For a description of an earlier version of the Candle Drill performed in Israelite, see Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 116-117.

Members form a single file line and began marching to the main altar located at the front of the church. Each member with offering in hand lights a single candle, which has been already pre-arranged and are strategically placed near the front edge of the main altar. The color of these pre-arranged candles are white, red, purple, green, yellow, pink, blue, and orange. Each candle corresponds to a specific petition. For example, a member who seeks financial blessings would light a green or yellow candle. Lighting a white or red candle ensures the reception of purification and power, respectively. Israelite's candle ritual continues the legacy of early Spiritual mothers like Mother Catherine who provided those seeking healing to light their own "wish lamps" at the Manger. Candle burning has always been a significant part of Israelite's ritualistic activities and continues today. In addition to the Candle Drill, the use and distribution of various oils is a Spiritual practice that remains a part of Israelite. During a service at Israelite in 2010, Bishop Wilson not only anointed the heads/hands of both members and visitors who appeared before him during a processional march up the center aisle of the church, but he also distributed "mastery oil," "success oil," "money oil," and "healing oil" to individuals in exchange for monetary offerings.<sup>250</sup>

The lighting of candles, physical anointing, and oil distributions serve as ritualized forms of the continuation of the Spiritual tradition by Israelite after Hurricane Katrina, but the mother church also maintains the "doctrine of mind" that was introduced by their founder Archbishop Johnson in his work, *The Twelfth Hour Meditator*. For example, Bishop Wilson, in a message entitled, "Get it in Your Mind What You Want God to Do for You," outlined three points concerning the mind:

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<sup>250</sup> I observed this ritual during a Sunday service at Israelite on July 25, 2010.

1. The mind is a power tool.
2. Both positive and negative things come from the mind.
3. A sound mind is a stable mind.

Following in the footsteps of his former teacher, Bishop Wilson confidently speaks about the power of the mind. The mind for him controls one's being and body, but, even more importantly, it ultimately controls an individual's destiny while on Earth. As it is written in *The Twelfth Hour Mediator*, Spiritual adherents must "train [their] mind[s] to know and use its own powers."<sup>251</sup> The mind is also an outlet for both positive and negative thoughts. Bishop Wilson establishes a direct connection between fear and negativity of the mind. For him, fear establishes mental blockages that holds captive to one's consciousness. The presence of blockages inhibits the individual from the capacity "to use [their] powers of Thought and of creative imagination" that the late Archbishop Johnson identified as "the Divine Faculties of the human mind."<sup>252</sup> Bishop Wilson in his third sermon point warns members/visitors of Israelite to maintain a "sound mind." For the mind in this condition is clear and stable. Such mental stability affords Spiritual people, according to Bishop Wilson, the ability to overcome hardships of life—includes but is not limited to sickness, troubled finances, and controlling relationships. To this end, Israelite members, despite the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, carry on the rich legacy of Spiritual churches in New Orleans. In the words of anthropologist Stephen Wehmeyer, Israelite "still having church."<sup>253</sup>

Antioch Spiritual Church (Antioch), unlike Israelite, was located at 1842 Flood Street in the heart of the lower ninth ward of New Orleans. Many of its members re-

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<sup>251</sup> E. J. Johnson, *The Twelfth Hour Mediator*, informally published, quoted in Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 160.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Wehmeyer, "Indians at the Door," 40.

located to Baton Rouge. Soon Antioch would began holding services every third Saturday of the month at St. Phillips Divine Spiritual Church of Christ—Baton Rouge’s first Spiritual church founded by Reverend Tracey E. Baker. In 2009, members of Antioch purchased a building at 2900 Grand Route St. John Street where they now have firmly re-established themselves in New Orleans.

Despite of the dislocation of its members and destruction of the original church, Antioch, under the faithful leadership of Bishop Francis, continues to carry out Spiritual doctrinal principles established by matriarchs and patriarchs of the Spiritual movement in New Orleans. Antioch maintains its commitment to Christianity. Such commitment is evident in their profession of the *Divine Spiritual Creed*:

I believe God is a *Spirit* Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered unto Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried; He descended into Hell, the third day he arose from the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the *Divine Spiritual Church*, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the *Spiritual* life everlasting. (emphasis added)<sup>254</sup>

Members of Antioch openly profess their belief in the Trinity and the life cycle of Jesus Christ as captured in his birth, death, and resurrection. They also believe that those who believe shall enjoy saintly communion, forgiveness of sins, physical resurrection, and everlasting life. In this way, most of the elements contained within the *Divine Spiritual Creed* lines up with orthodox Christianity. There are certainly tenets carefully woven into the creed that aligns with the Spiritual faith, however. For example, God is a “Spirit.” This notion of a spiritually configured God has been a part of the doctrinal narrative of the Spiritual(ist) churches since their establishment by Mother Anderson. Like those

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<sup>254</sup> “Our Belief,” Antioch Spiritual Church, accessed 3 February 2011, <http://www.antiochspiritualchurch.org/id5.html>.



Spiritual churches before it, Antioch utilizes John 4:24—“God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”—as Scriptural evidence to support this belief concerning God’s nature. Antioch’s profession of the creed during every service not only asserts the spiritual nature of God, but their confession also maintains those who believe in the doctrine of “divine spiritualism” will receive the gift of “Spiritual life everlasting.” This use of “Spiritual” as an adjective is not just a simple descriptor. But, its usage endows everlasting life with an ability to transcend realms of temporality, meaning that “Spiritual life everlasting” serves as the way in which those spiritual ancestors may return to the Earth as spiritual guides. Therefore, because of this spiritually endowed form of eternal life, patron saints like Sts. Michael, Jude, and Joseph, and spiritual guides such as Black Hawk, Sitting Bull, Queen Esther, Mother Leafy Anderson, and Mother Catherine Seals penetrate the temporal realm to intercede and guide members of Spiritual churches in general and Antioch in particular.

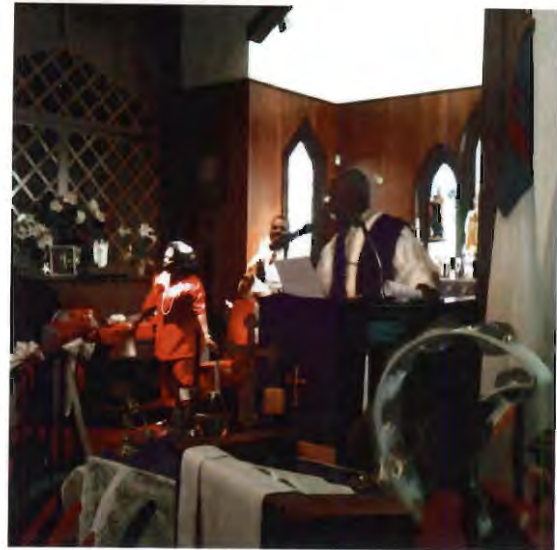
The members of Antioch, in addition to carrying on divine spiritualism, are committed to celebrating and honoring those patron saints and spiritual guides that continuously offer intercession and guidance on their behalf. For example, a Black Hawk service is held the first Friday of each month at 8:00 p.m. See figure 12 and 13.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> “Antioch Spiritual Church’s Photos,” Antioch Spiritual Church Facebook Page, accessed 1 February 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Antioch-Spiritual-Church/136174033096147>.



**Figure 16:** A vivid display of the offering table for the spiritual guide Black Hawk at Antioch Spiritual Church in New Orleans, 2010.



**Figure 17:** Bishop Francis, pastor of Antioch, offers words to his congregation concerning the role of Black Hawk in their everyday lives.

These photos taken from Antioch's photo album on their Facebook page provides an inside view of their ritual honoring of Black Hawk. The color red denotes spiritual power in Spiritual churches. Black Hawk is recognized as one who has the power to protect and guide Spiritual people that honor him as a spiritual guide. Therefore, red is the dominant color used in the Black Hawk service at Antioch. Red plumes with red votive candles adorn the altar (Figure 16). Red ribbon is intertwined with white ribbon and displayed throughout the church's interior (Figure 17). Members of Antioch adorn their bodies with red articles of clothing. Black Hawk services consist of singing, shouting, and dancing. All these activities are performed to give honor to Black Hawk. During these worship activities, members can be heard singing the Black Hawk Chant:

Black Hawk is a watchman on the wall.  
 Black Hawk is a watchman on the wall.  
 Black Hawk is a watchman on the wall.  
 On the wall.  
 On the wall.  
 On the wall.  
 He'll fight your battles on the wall.

He'll fight your battles on the wall.  
He'll fight your battles on the wall.  
On the wall.  
On the wall.  
On the wall.<sup>256</sup>

Members in this chant proclaim the role that the Native American spirit plays in their lives. Black Hawk is the watchman. As one Spiritual adherent states, "He [Black Hawk] watches your home when you're not around. He protects you on the road. Father Black Hawk is a watchman on the wall."<sup>257</sup> The focal point of the service involves a processional march of members to the table of Black Hawk (Figure 16). One by one, members approach the offering table where they receive a colored votive candle adorned with a single plume in exchange for a monetary offering, which is made unto the spirit of Black Hawk. Possession of this votive candle with feather ensures special favor from Black Hawk. The Black Hawk service at Antioch is a symbolic acknowledgement of Black Hawk's power, and this ritual represents the continuation of the legacy of Mother Anderson, for it was she who introduced this Native American spiritual guide into the cosmology of New Orleans Spiritualism.

The recovery of both Antioch Spiritual Church and Israelite Divine Spiritual Church from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina displays an impulse of resiliency that has characterized Spiritual(ist) churches in New Orleans. More importantly, these two Spiritual churches ensure the survival of a rich tradition—one characterized by spiritual guides, doctrines of healing/prophecy, rituals, patron saints, and private/public altars. Although these elaborate predicates of Spiritual churches of New Orleans have been explored throughout this current chapter, the final chapter seeks to penetrate deeper into

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<sup>256</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 137.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 141.

the doctrinal/ritual framework of the Spiritual church by focusing on how it plays out on a more microcosm level. The final chapter, therefore, explores how the individual Spiritual adherent employs Spiritual doctrine and ritual as creative medium to express multiple interpretations of him/herself that are personal, collective, and dynamical.

## Chapter 4

### **Single Symbol, Multiple Selves: The Use of Black Hawk in Expressing Personal, Collective, and Dynamical Selves**

The previous chapter constructed a historical narrative in order to forefront the richness of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches' belief system. Symbols, ideas, doctrines, and rituals contained within this system represent viable outlets available to members for creative usage. Specifically, adherents apply interpersonal and intrapersonal modes of creativity within these available outlets to express three self-interpretations—personal, collective, and dynamical selves. The primary goal of this chapter is to examine how an *individual* Spiritual(ist) adherent employs a *single* symbol as creative medium i.e. outlet to express multiple selves.

This final chapter is composed of five sections. The first section examines how Black Hawk became a master symbol in the New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches. Multiple meanings, interpretations, and applications are ascribed onto the symbol of Black Hawk in the Spiritual(ist) churches. An examination of multiple symbols allows for a more robust capturing of complexities is an interpretative assumption that this chapter's focus on a single symbol—Black Hawk—seeks to problematize. A historical narrative of Bishop Daniel William Jackson is offered in the second section. Therefore, in addition to analyzing a single symbol, this chapter posits Bishop Jackson as a viable initiating point in an analysis of African American religion, an interpretative move that forefronts how individuals negotiate conflicting desires for collectivity/individuality. This spiritual biography serves as a transition point, signaling a movement to the praxis portion of the chapter. Sections three through five represent case studies, including

descriptions and analyzes of various Black Hawk rituals. A public Black Hawk service is presented in section three, while a one-on-one Black Hawk fellowship and a private Black Hawk healing ritual are explored in sections four and five, respectively. Combined, all three case studies illustrate the variety of ways Bishop Jackson as an *individual* utilizes Black Hawk as a creative outlet to articulate multiple views of himself.

### **Black Hawk: A “Master Symbol” in New Orleans Spiritual(ist) Churches**

The first documented account of Black Hawk occurred in the *Louisiana Weekly*, an African American newspaper in New Orleans. In a 1926 article, Black Hawk is introduced, along with three other spirits at the Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Association national conference. “Different spirit guides were introduced through Reverend L. Anderson: 1, control, Father Jones; 2, control, White Hawk; 3, control, Black Hawk; 4, control, Virgin Mary...”<sup>258</sup> These four spirits were publicly recognized as “spiritual guides.” In addition to identifying spiritual guides, ministers conducted healing services under the direction of these four “invisible divine spirits” of Father Jones, White Hawk, Black Hawk, and Virgin Mary. This national conference served as a platform by which Mother Anderson solidified Black Hawk’s role as both a spiritual guide/healer. Beyond the conference, Mother Anderson utilized multiple outlets to reinforce this dual image of Black Hawk. For example, Black Hawk received visibility in her Sunday, Thursday, and Friday night services. No matter the color of her dressing robe, whether yellow, gold, or white, worn during her public services, “a Black Hawk

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<sup>258</sup> M. D. Minor, “Eternal Life Spiritualists in Convention,” 8. Archbishop B.S. Johnson who worked with Mother Anderson confirms an association between Mother Anderson and the four spiritual guides listed in the *Louisiana Weekly* article. Smith, *Spirit World*, 43.

mantle was worn over her dress.”<sup>259</sup> Theatrical works like *A White Man’s Sin and a Squaw’s Revenge*—put on by the Bienville Club of Eternal Life, Spiritualist Mission—presented an augmented historical mapping of interactions between a white settler in New York and an Indian squaw. A *Louisiana Weekly* article covering this production raved about how “the powerful Indian guide [Black Hawk] takes control of Mrs. Leafy Anderson, an Indian squaw.”<sup>260</sup> Additionally, Mother Anderson taught aspiring Spiritualists about the role of Black Hawk in her developing classes on Tuesday nights.<sup>261</sup> Mother Dora Tyson, a student of Mother Anderson who would also make her mark in the movement, described such Black Hawk teachings:

When Mother Anderson furst come down heah she tol us er bout Black Hawk. She tol us date she wanted us to pray to him because he was a great saint for spiritualism only. Dat is he was a spiritualist saint. She call Black Hawk to a special consul fo us. Ah know cause Ah saw him. Yeah, Mother Anderson pointed him out to us an said, ‘Dat’s ya saint chillin. Go to him fo anything ya want. He’ll never disappoint ya.’<sup>262</sup>

Mother Anderson posited Black Hawk as a saint. Specifically, Black Hawk served as a “spiritualist saint” in that he heard the prayers and answered the petitions of Spiritualist believers. Black Hawk embodied faithfulness. He provided for the every want of those believers who petitioned him. Black Hawk is presented as both a guide and a saint,

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<sup>259</sup> See Robert McKinney interview with Mother Dora Tyson, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 28), 3.

<sup>260</sup> *The Louisiana Weekly*, 22 January 1927.

<sup>261</sup> Mother Tyson attended Mother Anderson class held at the Longshoreman Hall on Jackson Avenue. Mother Anderson held services and “demonstrating” classes at this location until her church on 2719 Amelia was constructed, where she continued teaching these classes on Tuesday nights. See Advertisement for “The Eternal Life Christian Spiritualist Church,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, 11 December 1926, 4.

<sup>262</sup> Robert McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk...Indian Worshipped by Spiritualists,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 29), 1.

interchangeable terms used by Mother Leafy Anderson to describe the Native American spirit. Whether imprinted on a priestly cloak, displayed in a theatrical production, or discussed within a pedagogical setting, Black Hawk was presented as a vital spiritual force in the ecclesiastical activities of Mother Anderson in particular and Spiritualist adherents in general. As such, from 1920 until her death in 1927, Mother Anderson intricately stitched an image of Black Hawk as a spiritual saint/guide/healer into the doctrinal fabric of New Orleans Spiritualist churches.

Throughout the 1930s, Mother Dora Tyson continued to pay homage to the “great saint of spiritualism” introduced to her in Mother Anderson’s developing classes. Every Tuesday night Mother Tyson held a special Black Hawk service at her church Eternal Love Christian Faith, No. 1. On this “special night,” she shared with WPA writer Robert McKinney, “[we] honor an pay our respects to Black Hawk...for [he] is de best saint dat spiritualist has...”<sup>263</sup> McKinney, in addition to interviewing Mother Tyson on several occasions, also attended one of her Black Hawk services on April 11, 1937. He gave a vivid account of this public service:

As the spectator enters the door while service is in progress, he feels a weird sensation, which may possibly be caused by the semi-darkness which prevails throughout most of the service...The Black Hawk statue on the main altar and one of the side altars are dedicated to Mother Anderson...There is much singing, praying, and testifying...The whole church is thrown in darkness when Mother Dora [Tyson] enters the rostrum, and it remains so until the completion of the sermon, prophesying, [and healing]...Mother Dora goes into a trance...member are called and prayed over...then the services come to a close.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk...Indian Worshipped by Spiritualists,” 1 and 3.

<sup>264</sup> Robert McKinney and Hazel Breaux, “The Eternal Christian Love, No. 1 (Negro),” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 36), 1-3.



This description provides details about the interior space of the church. The church was shrouded in darkness. Verbal intonations in the form of singing, praying, testifying, and prophesying saturated the interior of Eternal Christian Love, No. 1. All these activities culminated with the embodiment of the spirit of Black Hawk through Mother Tyson. Beyond honoring Black Hawk in public services, Mother Tyson also availed her church to individuals who wanted to privately petition him. Such participants made supplications before a side Black Hawk altar often consisting of a picture of him with a red candle burning in front of it. Red symbolized power.<sup>265</sup> According to Mother Tyson, Black Hawk is imbued with unfailing power for he “aint never failed to serve” those who petitions him.<sup>266</sup> Mother Tyson’s reverence for Black Hawk as a powerful saint was not without consequence. Many residents of the city, including fellow Spiritualists like Father Thomas of St. Paul Spiritual Church, No.1, viewed her as a voodoo practitioner who specialized in workings of the *Black Hawk Voodoo Book*.<sup>267</sup> “Dere may be a little hoodoo in that Black Hawk business,” maintains Father Thomas.<sup>268</sup> Despite such notions, veneration of Black Hawk as a spirit who granted the wishes of those believing in him remained a part of the Spiritualist cosmology of New Orleans.

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<sup>265</sup> Zora Neale Hurston in her extensive work on hoodoo offers a system of meaning based upon the different colors of candles. In this system, red symbolized victory. See Zora Neale Hurston, “Hoodoo in America,” 413-414.

<sup>266</sup> McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk...Indian Worshipped by Spiritualists,” 4.

<sup>267</sup> Catherine Dillon, “The Divine Dora,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 91), 1. For Father Thomas’ account of how he considered Mother Tyson’s usage of Black Hawk as “hoodoo business,” see Robert McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 29), 1-5.

<sup>268</sup> Robert McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk: Interview with Father Joseph,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 29), 2.

Black Hawk by the 1970s still represented a symbolic marker characterizing many of the Spiritual churches in New Orleans. Nearly a half-century after Mother Tyson's Black Hawk services, special ceremonies were still held in many New Orleans Spiritual churches to honor this Native American saint. Antioch Spiritual Church, Israelite Divine Spiritual Church (Israelite), Infant Jesus of Prague Spiritual Church, St. Lazarus Spiritual Church, St. Christopher Spiritual Church, Guiding Star Spiritual Church represented only a few of the many churches that honored Black Hawk with a special service.

In 1979 historian Jason Berry witnessed one such Black Hawk service in Guiding Star Spiritual Church located in the lower ninth ward of New Orleans. He described the church's interior as humble—adorned with “framed pictures of Jesus, candles on a modest altar, an old creaky piano, and standing in front of the altar a tepee made of thin stakes, with incense burning at its base.”<sup>269</sup> At this service, the lead celebrator, Jules Anderson (now Bishop Anderson), reminded participants that Black Hawk was their source of help and protection. The leader maintained, “Black Hawk is a watchman! He will fight your battles.”<sup>270</sup> Archbishop Lydia Gilford of Infant Jesus of Prague Spiritual Church posited Black Hawk as a “praying Indian” who Spiritual people “go to for peace and justice.”<sup>271</sup> Therefore, by the 1970s Black Hawk was not only a spiritual guide aiding Spiritual adherents in the navigation of their everyday lives, but this Native American saint also watched and fought on behalf of petitioning Spiritual believers. Black Hawk

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<sup>269</sup> Jason Berry, “The Spirit of Black Hawk—These Parts: How did a Stubborn Indian Warrior from Western Illinois Become a Saint in the Churches of New Orleans?” *Chicago Reader*, June 30, 1994, accessed March 3, 2011, <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-spirit-of-black-hawk/Content?oid=884875>.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 53.

was no longer a symbol of duality representing guidance and healing as introduced by Mother Anderson but now served as a symbol of multiplicity symbolizing watchfulness, protection, justice, and peace.

In the decades that followed, public feasts and public/private altars were utilized by many Spiritual churches/members to honor Black Hawk as a spirit possessing multidimensional function. Black Hawk feasts were held annually at various Spiritual churches throughout the city. For example, the Black Hawk service at Israelite drew many members and non-members of the Spiritual faith. The focal point of the feast was the special table set for Black Hawk. See Figure 18.<sup>272</sup>



**Figure 18.** Black Hawk Service at Israelite Divine Spiritual Church. New Orleans, 1995. Photo: Michael Berry.

Draped in crimson tablecloths, this feast table was covered with “bananas, sugarcane stalks, sweet potatoes, apples, oranges, and peppermints, interspersed with trio-clusters of red candles.”<sup>273</sup> The red color of the tablecloths and candles signaled power and victory—two characteristics assigned to the spirit of Black Hawk. Candles represented

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<sup>272</sup> Jason Berry, *The Spirit of Black Hawk: A Mystery of Africans and Indians* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), photo.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

light that was available for participants to burn on either public or private altars dedicated to the Native American spiritual guide. Apples contained healing properties and bananas provided nutrients, while sweet potatoes “sweetened the condition” or made circumstances favorable.<sup>274</sup> In this way, the fruit and other table items symbolized concrete manifestations of Black Hawk’s blessings readily available to participants partaking of the feast table. In addition to celebratory feast, elaborate public and private altars were constructed to honor the saint of Black Hawk in Spiritual churches and residences of adherents, respectively. Anthropologist Stephen Wehmeyer offered a portraiture of Bishop Edmonia Caldwell’s Black Hawk altar:

Bishop Caldwell keeps a personal altar to Black Hawk behind her front door, which leads from the street into her sitting room...Atop a small end table, a worn bust of an Indian in plumed headdress sits beside a can that once held Café du Monde coffee. Now, Bishop Caldwell told me, the can is filled with pure white sand from the lake and lights [candles] used to work the spirit of Black Hawk. When one enters Bishop Caldwell’s house, the altar is hidden by the open door. It is once inside, with the door securely closed, that one realizes one is in the presence of the divine.<sup>275</sup>

Black Hawk is positioned as a watchman at the front door of Bishop Caldwell’s home. White sand and burning candles invoke the spirit to action. Black Hawk, according to Bishop Caldwell, is a source of help in that he provides guidance and protection. As captured in the working of personal altars, the boundaries of Black Hawk’s watchful eyes transcend beyond the geographical boundaries of Spiritual churches penetrating the personal residences of members. The spirit of Black Hawk transcends fixed modalities of space. Wehmeyer also provided a vivid description of a public Black Hawk altar adorning the interior space of Israelite in the late 1990s:

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<sup>274</sup> Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 16 February 2011, New Orleans.

<sup>275</sup> Stephen C. Wehmeyer, “Indians at the Door,” 22.

Behind me, to my left however, stood an altar that was as disconcerting as it was enthralling. The light from a number of red pillar candles picked out the details of a wooden cigar store Indian, their warm glow illuminating his plumed warbonnet and fringed tunic, the swell of muscular arms and thighs rendered in dark wood buffed to a dull shine. A toy spear, painted black, was propped in the crook of the statue's upraised arm. With one foot stepping forward and one hand shading his eyes, the figure was immobilized in an attitude of watchfulness: the lookout, the guide, poised at the moment of discovery... [this altar was also] covered with other representations of Indians, but also with flowers, statues of the victorious St. Michael and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, framed chromolithographs of more saints, more Indians and old photos of Mother Anderson and Mother Dora [Tyson].<sup>276</sup>

This description captured a historical narrative of the dissemination of Black Hawk throughout the doctrinal framework of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches. Red, again, served as the symbolic color of Black Hawk early in the movement. For this color symbolized the multiple battles Black Hawk fought and won for those who have solicited his assistance. With a plumed warbonnet on his head and a painted spear in his hand, Black Hawk for over eighty years has watched and guided adherents of the Spiritual(ist) faith. However, Black Hawk does not work alone but is accompanied by two matriarchal figures of the Spiritual(ist) tradition, Mother Anderson and Mother Tyson. Two figures who were instrumental in establishing Black Hawk as an important symbol—the former introducing him while the latter maintaining him in such way that his legacy would live on in successive generations of Spiritual(ist) adherents.

The preceding historical narrative of Black Hawk traces his introduction and maintenance in New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches, and in doing so illustrates how this Native American spirit has become a “master symbol” among Spiritual(ist) adherents.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries,” 140.

<sup>277</sup> Claude F. Jacobs, “Spirit Guides and Possession in New Orleans Black Spiritual Churches,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 102 (1989): 45-56+65-67. Claude Jacobs also identifies Black Hawk along with other spiritual guides as master symbols, a

Here master symbol signifies the capacity of a single symbol to link together multiple representations i.e. meanings that have been ascribed to this same symbol over time.<sup>278</sup> Such a capacity to link meanings is based upon the ability of the symbol itself to take on multiple interpretations. “The same symbolic form may have different shades of meaning to different individuals, and at different times to the same individual,” or it may be given “different interpretations by different people under different circumstance.”<sup>279</sup> Difference among individuals, discontinuity within the individual, or varied circumstances represent possible sources for the (re)interpretation of a symbol. Regardless of the source each interpretation results in the layering of an additional meaning unto the symbol. Therefore, a master symbol as a point of connectivity must possess a degree of flexibility to accommodate the layering of these multiple interpretations. Black Hawk as a master symbol in New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches possesses such a symbolic flexibility for it “has acquired over the years a multitude of meanings.”<sup>280</sup> In the early 1920s Mother Anderson introduced to Spiritualist adherents a dual natured Native American spirit who would serve as their saint/guide and a source of healing. However, by the late 1990s,

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symbolic notion advanced by Eric R. Wolf. Specifically, Black Hawk serves a symbol of “protest and empowerment” that unifies Spiritual people. My notion of Black Hawk focuses on its ability as a master symbol to uphold multiple meanings. It is not my aim to focus entirely on Black Hawk as a symbol that solely focuses on matters of collectivity.

<sup>278</sup>Eric R. Wolf, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 71 (1958): 34-39. I use Wolf’s notion of the master symbol as one that has the ability to possess and link multiple meanings. However, I am not committed to viewing the master symbol as one that solely expresses a “collective representation.” I seek to extend the function of the master symbol to include its role in holding in tension collective as well as individual representations, primarily in relation to various notions of self-interpretations.

<sup>279</sup> Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 36.

<sup>280</sup> Donald V. Kurtz, “The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Politics of Becoming Human,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38 (1982): 194.

Black Hawk symbolized multiple principles like victory, protection, power, justice, and peace. Serving as an intersectional point for these multiple meanings ascribed by Spiritual(ist) people, Black Hawk represents a master symbol in the New Orleans movement. He holds in tension added meanings without negating the former representations of healing and guidance as introduced by Spiritual(ist) founder Mother Anderson. Such a capacity denotes Black Hawk's flexibility as a master symbol. A direct relationship exists between symbolic flexibility and endurance.<sup>281</sup> Namely, the ability of Black Hawk as a symbol to take on additional layers of meaning yields a greater chance of his survival as a symbol in the Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans. A Spiritual minister captures this notion of Black Hawk's continuity in an interview conducted in 2001:

You see Black Hawk in the church is greater than Mother Anderson. In other words, more people know about Black Hawk when they come to the Spiritual Church than they know about Mother Leafy Anderson who is credited as being the founder. Because he was a spirit guide. Personally, if I talk about him I talk about her. Without her I wouldn't know about Black Hawk. Now, that's the question everybody asks: what is the relationship between Black Hawk and the Spiritual Church? The only relationship that I know of between is that one day he made [an] appearance to me as a guide, and one day he made [an] appearance to Mother Anderson and she began to work with him, and she introduced him to other spiritual people.<sup>282</sup>

Bishop Oliver Coleman discusses how Black Hawk's popularity—in regard to his usage and to the knowledge of him among some New Orleans' residents—has exceeded that of accredited founder of the Spiritual(ist) churches Mother Anderson. For Bishop Coleman, Black Hawk's role as a “spirit guide” aids in securing his continuity in the Spiritual

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<sup>281</sup> Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man*, 36-38.

<sup>282</sup> Erwan Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire: Les Églises Spirituelles Noires Américaines de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (Paris: Éditions de L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2006), 162.

churches of New Orleans. This interpretation placed upon this Native American symbol by Mother Anderson receives further confirmation through Black Hawk's appearance to Bishop Coleman. For Black Hawk, in his words, "made [an] appearance to me as a spirit guide." He adds another interpretative layer unto the Black Hawk symbol by establishing congruency between the spirit guide and Mother Anderson. "Personally," Bishop Coleman states, "if I talk about him I talk about her." As master symbol, Black Hawk continues to take on layers of interpretation by Spiritual adherents like Bishop Coleman.<sup>283</sup> The maintenance of such status is the result of Black Hawk's possession of symbolic flexibility, which affords a linking of multiple interpretations.

While symbolic flexibility of Black Hawk as a master symbol plays a vital role in this saint's continuity in New Orleans Spiritual churches, creative mediumship also serves as a catalyst in the continuation of Black Hawk. Black Hawk serves as a source of creativity. Doctrines, rituals, and practices have been created by Spiritual(ist) adherents to pay homage to the Native American spiritual guide. Thus, the creative actions of members of Spiritual(ist) churches are vividly displayed in Black Hawk services, feasts, and altars (public/private)—concrete manifestations utilized to honor their Native American saint. The materiality of statues and candles, physicality of moving bodies, ideations of beliefs and images, and orientations of placement and space, represent creative mediums utilized by Spiritual(ist) adherents to invoke and work the spirit of

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<sup>283</sup> It is important to note that some of these interpretations align themselves with Father Thomas' thoughts concerning Mother Tyson's usage of Black Hawk in the Spiritualist church during the 1930s. Bishop Coleman discusses the presence of this strand of rejection in the current-day Spiritual churches. He states, "Every Spiritual church do not honor or even have a[n] altar to Black Hawk. They don't even talk about him. Some Spiritual church[es] adjust strictly on the canonized saints. They don't talk about nothing else." See Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire*, 162.



Black Hawk. For example, one member describes the method she employs to evoke

Black Hawk:

I offer him whiskey and a cigar. Because the Indians love peyote, they love whiskey, alcohol. When the Americans came over they gave him a lot of alcohol, and stuff. I set up an altar spot. I've got an altar in the back, and I give Black Hawk whiskey and a strong cigar, so that he can protect me while I am playing in the night clubs and stuff... So far he's been protecting [me]. I just light it [the cigar] and put it in the ashtray there. I pour him some whiskey in a glass, and put the glass up there for him.<sup>284</sup>

This Spiritual member constructs an altar in her home to petition the spirit of Black Hawk. A glass of whiskey and a strong cigar represent two things, in her words, "Indians love." These objects, therefore, are meant to entice the spirit of Black Hawk. Specifically, alcohol and tobacco act as instruments to petition Black Hawk's protection, one of the primary attributes ascribed to him over time. The altar is a concrete manifestation of the individual's desire to ascertain a sense of protection while she "play[s] in the night clubs" of New Orleans. It is her creative action that leads to the reality of the altar. And, in turn, this creative product serves as a conduit through which the symbolic meaning of Black Hawk becomes a felt reality in her real life experiences.

This use of creativity in the petitioning of Black Hawk points to a deeper impetus that drives the continuing presence of this Native American saint in the New Orleans Spiritual(ist) tradition for close to a century. Adherents, in their invoking of Black Hawk through creative acts/products, are able to apprehend a sense of agency, both collective and personal forms. Such use of creative capacity, in the words of Anthony Pinn, "say[s] something about the creativity and agency of blacks."<sup>285</sup> Services, feasts, and altars are created by Spiritual(ist) adherents of African descent to honor Black Hawk. But these

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<sup>284</sup> Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire*, 135.

<sup>285</sup> Pinn, *Terror and Triumph*, 138.

creations also serve as viable outlets used by members to express personalized and collectivized forms of agency. Spiritual(ist) churches in this way provide media—include but not limited to symbols like Black Hawk and doctrinal beliefs in spirit returning, altar usage, and rituals of veneration—that members use to create various outlets in order to exercise agency. In this way, Spiritual(ist) churches act as “creative medium.” And, it is this ability to express various forms of agency via creativity that affords these same individuals the ability to articulate various modes of viewing themselves—both in relationship to others as well as to themselves. Therefore, Black Hawk, as a “richly multivalent religious symbol,” and the rituals and practices created to invoke him serve as viable outlets employed by members to convey various articulations of self-interpretations.<sup>286</sup> In other words, the various ways in which the “symbolic meaning” of Black Hawk and resultant rituals/practices surrounding this saint have been “subject[ed] to various appropriations, interpretations, reinterpretations, and transformations” points to the creative struggles of Spiritual(ist) people to define themselves.<sup>287</sup> The invocation of Black Hawk offers protection, healing, justice, and guidance. However, in addition to these ascribed assurances, Black Hawk offers adherents the ability to see themselves in complex ways that are personal, collective, and dynamical. The next section examines how one such Spiritual adherent utilizes the symbol of Black Hawk as a “creative medium” to articulate multiple views of himself. However, before exploring Bishop

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<sup>286</sup> Francisco J. Crespo, “The Virgins of Guadalupe (Tonantzin) and La Caridad del Cobre: Two Marian Devotions as Fluid Symbols of Collective and Individual Cultural Identities,” in *Religion as Art: Guadalupe, Orishas, and Sufi*, ed. Steven Loza (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 173.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Daniel William Jackson's usage of Black Hawk to express various self-interpretations, an account of his involvement in the New Orleans Spiritual movement is offered.

### **A "Spiritual" Biography of Bishop Daniel William Jackson**

On the morning of February 17, 2011, Bishop Jackson granted me access into his "working room." This room is a designated space in the house where he performs most of his spiritual work. The walls of this room appeared to have a life of their own. Brightly colored pictures of saints, various images of Jesus, and photos of his immediate family represented some of the items adorning these walls. Bishop Jackson directed my attention to various statues of patron saints like St. Ann and St. Joseph along with lithographs of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Holy Family that he has either strategically placed on his "working altar" or on the top mantle of a mirrored dresser. He effortlessly moved from one item to the next describing both the placement and purpose of each one. However, certain objects warranted a special acknowledgement. "That picture of the blessed mother belonged to my mother," explained Bishop Jackson. It was an old lithograph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary housed within a wooden frame. See figure 19.



**Figure 19.** Immaculate Heart of Mary belonging to Bishop Jackson's Mother. New Orleans, 2011.

The lithograph showed signs of aging in that the white veil and robe of Mary now had an off white appearance. However, despite being over sixty years old, Mary's flaming heart encircled by a garland of thorned roses still maintained its crimson color. Bishop Jackson and I stood silent before his mother's Immaculate Heart of Mary. The pierced heart illuminating from the center of Mary's chest area brought to mind the prophecy of Simeon in Luke 2:34-35.<sup>288</sup> "She kept this picture by the front door next to the Sacred Heart of Jesus," Bishop Jackson candidly shared with me. In addition to this "blessed mother" lithograph, he provided intricate details on a Black Hawk statue, an Our Lady of Grace statue, and a plaque of the Lord's Supper—all sacred objects that once adorned his mother's altar. Now these objects rested upon his "working altar." These objects not only represented material forms used by Bishop Jackson to work Spiritual forces, but these altar objects, more importantly, symbolized the continuation of a Spiritual legacy passed down to him through a matrilineal line.<sup>289</sup>

Bishop Jackson's mother, Octavia Jackson, was introduced to the Spiritual tradition through her aunt, Mother Ida Morgan, pastor and founder of Blessed St. Mark Spiritual Church (St. Mark S.C.), an independent Spiritual church located in the Carrollton section of New Orleans. In addition to attending her aunt's development classes at St. Mark S.C., Octavia Jackson would also be ordained in this same Spiritual church. Bishop Jackson in an interview discussed the various ways that his mother

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<sup>288</sup> Luke 2:34-35 states, "Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul.'"

<sup>289</sup> In addition to Bishop Jackson's great-aunt Ida Morgan, two of his mother's sisters were also leaders of Spiritual churches in New Orleans: Mary Smith (St. Rita Spiritual Church) and Julia Williams (St. Rita Spiritual Church-different location). Both churches were named after their guiding patron saint, St. Rita.

practiced “things of the spirit” transmitted through her aunt.<sup>290</sup> “Mother always had an altar; [she] always burned a candle [on it],” Bishop Jackson remembered. “I liked to see my mother heal.” He talked about seeing his mother heal for the first time. “She used blessed oils and plants.” Bishop Jackson witnessed firsthand his mother’s commitment to Spiritual foundational doctrines and rituals through her utilization of altars/candles and her performance of healing acts. According to Bishop Jackson, his connection to Spiritual churches came by way of his mother’s spiritual works and her direct involvement in St. Mark S.C. “I have always been part of the Spiritual movement through my mother,” noted Bishop Jackson. Because of this influence by his mother and other Spiritual women in his family like Mother Morgan, Bishop Jackson joined St. Mark S.C. in 1963 at the age of eleven. Ten years later, after receiving formal Spiritual training in his great aunt’s development classes, Bishop Jackson became, in his words, “completely involved in the Spiritual movement.”<sup>291</sup> Therefore, St. Mark S.C. served as the birthing ground of a Spiritual legacy that initiated through a matrilineal line but would continue through the work of a male heir Bishop Jackson.

Bishop Jackson received his ministerial license from St. Mark S.C. in 1969. Five years later, Bishop Jackson at the age of twenty-two pastored his first church, St. George Spiritual Church (St. George S.C.). The church ceased to exist after the death of its founder, Mother Height, because it was located on disputed heir property. Bishop Jackson and some former members of St. George S.C., including his mother, joined St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No.1 (St. Daniel S.C.) in 1977. This move was deliberate for the

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<sup>290</sup> Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 15 February 2011, New Orleans.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

legacy of St. Daniel S.C. extended back to the early 1920s. The church was initially called St. Michael Spiritual Temple, No. 2, one of the many Spiritual churches established by Mother Kate Francis during the first decade of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans.<sup>292</sup> Mother Kate assigned this church to her brother Father Daniel Dupont.<sup>293</sup> By 1963, Father Dupont had renamed the church to St. Daniel S.C. and relocated it to a white stucco building on 1736 Amelia Street. This building was located within close proximity (approximately 2.6 miles) to the first Spiritualist church (2719 Amelia) established in New Orleans by Mother Leafy Anderson. Additionally, this building had formerly housed Sacred Heart Spiritualist Church—founded by another early leader of the Spiritual(ist) movement named Reverend Lena Scovotto (Italian). St. Daniel S.C. in this location symbolized an intersectional point. It was where Bishop Jackson's spiritual training received from matriarchs of his family converged with three other strands of the Spiritual(ist) movement represented in the ministries of Mother Kate, Father Dupont, and Reverend Scovotto.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bishop Jackson was an active member of St. Daniel S.C. and a studious pupil of the New Orleans Spiritual tradition. Concerning the former, he coordinated major feasts—including those dedicated to St. Joseph, Infant Jesus, Sacred Heart, St. Ann, St. Raymond, and St. Michael—celebrated at St. Daniel S.C. Concerning the latter, Bishop Jackson received in-depth spiritual training in the development classes of Bishop Wilbert Hawkins (St. Anthony Divine Spiritual Temple of

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<sup>292</sup> “Mother Kate is Buried as Flock Mourns,” *The Tribune, New Orleans*, 1 December 1939, 6.

<sup>293</sup> Robert McKinney, “Mother Kate Francis Has Returned Already: Co-Workers Agree,” Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229), 3-4.

Christ) and Bishop Edmonia Caldwell (Prudential Spiritual Church)—niece of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) church founder Mother Leafy Anderson. In 1984, Bishop Jackson was ordained into the bishopric by Bishop Caldwell. As bishop, he held the second highest position (archbishop-top position) recognized in Spiritual churches of New Orleans. Four years later, he served as secretary of the Bishops' Council of Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ. After the tenures of Reverend Lawson Givens and Bishop Herman Brown, Bishop Jackson became the pastor of St. Daniel S.C. in 1989.<sup>294</sup> St. Daniel S.C., under the leadership of Bishop Jackson, held the following weekly services: mid-day service (Sunday, 12:00 p.m.), Blessed Mother service (7:30 p.m.), and Black Hawk service (Friday, 7:30 p.m.). Each service contained, in the words of Bishop Jackson, "a Spiritual format."<sup>295</sup> This format consisted of devotion, which included prayer, singing, and testifying (known as "demonstrations" in the earlier days of the Spiritual church). Healing and prophecy followed the devotional period at St. Daniel S.C. For Blessed Mother and Black Hawk services, the acts of healing and prophetic utterances were carried out through the evoking of the spirit for which the service was held. For example, Friday night Black Hawk services, in addition to the "spiritual format," included the evoking of the spirit of Black Hawk. Bishop Jackson maintained

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<sup>294</sup> Documentation shows that Bishop Jackson served as the pastor of St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1 throughout the mid-90s. However, according to a program from the national conference of Israel Universal Divine Spiritual Churches of Christ, Bishop Lolita Jackson served as the pastor of St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1 from 2000 to 2003. See "Association Church 2000-2001 Records" and the "Obituary of Bishop Edmonia Mary Cooper Caldwell," Obituaries Orleans Parish Louisiana (New Orleans Volunteer Association), accessed March 11, 2011, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/obits/1/c-01.txt>. Documentation supporting who held this position at the time of Hurricane Katrina is unavailable.

<sup>295</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 26 February 2011.

that St. Daniel S.C. was “not a Black Hawk church,” but that he brought Black Hawk with him.<sup>296</sup> Before Bishop Jackson became the pastor of St. Daniel S.C., Friday night service was categorized as a “healing and prophecy service.” However, after 1989, St. Daniel S.C., under the leadership of Bishop Jackson, dedicated each Friday night to the Native American spiritual guide. Not only did Bishop Jackson formally introduce spiritual guides like Black Hawk into the structure of St. Daniel S.C., but he also established the United Spiritual Churches of Christ in 2000. This association consisted of the following Spiritual churches (founders): Israelite Divine Spiritual Church, No. 5 (Mother Loretta Hall), Prudential Spiritual Church (Bishop Edmonia Caldwell), New Creation Spiritual Church (Bishop Victoria McSwain), St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 3 (Minister Gloria Williams), St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 4 (Mother Enda Kingberry), St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 5 (Reverend Lawson Givens), Star of David Prayer Band (Minister Lillie Mae Wilfred), St. Jude Spiritual Church (Minister Florence Stephens), Faith Healing Temple (Larry Sains), St. Martin Spiritual Church (Reverend John King), St. James, St. Paul Spiritual Church (Bishop Larry White), St. Michael Spiritual Church (Bishop Ellis Barrel), and St. Raymond Spiritual Church (Bishop Ben Ross). Founders of each of these churches were ministers ordained in St. Daniel S.C. The formation of this association by Bishop Jackson officially established St. Daniel S.C. as a “mother church.” Furthermore, the formation of United Spiritual Churches of Christ by Bishop Jackson further solidified the presence of Spiritual churches and associations in New Orleans. United Spiritual Churches of Christ along with Israel Universal Divine Spiritual

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<sup>296</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 26 February 2011. Although St. Daniel Spiritual Church did not officially celebrate Black Hawk prior to Bishop Jackson’s pastoral tenure, individual members may have petitioned Black Hawk in their personal residences.



Churches of Christ and United Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ were national Spiritual associations headquartered in the Crescent City.

### **Black Hawk Service at St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1**

St. Daniel S.C., before the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, held services to honor Black Hawk every Friday night at 7:30 p.m. Both members and non-members after walking up the steep steps of this Spiritual church enter into a dimmed sanctuary. Much like services held by Mother Tyson in the 1930s, the Black Hawk service is performed in the cloak of darkness. Darkness is a symbolic recognition of Black Hawk's power.<sup>297</sup> Red candles serve as the only source of illumination. "Red is a Black Hawk color," notes Bishop Jackson.<sup>298</sup> It denotes victory. Located in front of the main altar is the "Black Hawk table" prepared by Bishop Jackson. A statue of Black Hawk, a single red candle, and seven-day red/white candles adorn this special table. "The light burning to him." Bishop Jackson explains the burning red candle as light that honors the spirit of Black Hawk. The candle burns before a bust of Black Hawk. The bust does not actually embody the spirit of Black Hawk. It, however, is a concrete representation of the Native American spirit being honored in this special ceremony. The seven-day "blessed candles" are given to participants at the end of service. These red/white candles are visible symbols attesting to Black Hawk's ability to release victory/power in the lives of those who burn these blessed "lights" unto him. The service begins with singing, praying, and testifying. Starting services in this manner is the "spiritual way," a pattern established by early mothers of the Spiritual(ist) movement. Claude Jacobs and Andrew Kaslow also note this initiating pattern in their observation of a Black Hawk ceremony in Israelite Divine

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<sup>297</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 139

<sup>298</sup> Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 16 February 2011.

Spiritual Church.<sup>299</sup> Bishop Jackson, after the offering period, stands near the Black Hawk table and, in his words, “opens up the service.” This verbal petition serves as a symbolic opening of the spirit door for the spirit of Black Hawk to enter.<sup>300</sup> The door represents the boundary between the temporal and spiritual realm. Thus, the door must be opened in order for the latter to gain access to the former. The verbal invocation of Black Hawk precedes the healing and prophecy portion of the service for it is through him that wholeness and utterances occur. Although Bishop Jackson leads the services, Black Hawk may work through other participants to carry out spiritual healings and prophetic utterances.

The completion of the healing/prophecy signals a swift transition in the Black Hawk service at St. Daniel S.C. Bishop Jackson takes a small cast iron cauldron filled with “all-purpose” incense, lights the powdery substance, and places it in the center of the church.<sup>301</sup> The smoke, according to Bishop Jackson, invokes the spirit of Black Hawk. Participants, including Bishop Jackson, encircle the smoking cauldron and then sit on the floor. The following diagram (figure 20) illustrates this formation in relationship to other elements of the service like the Black Hawk table:

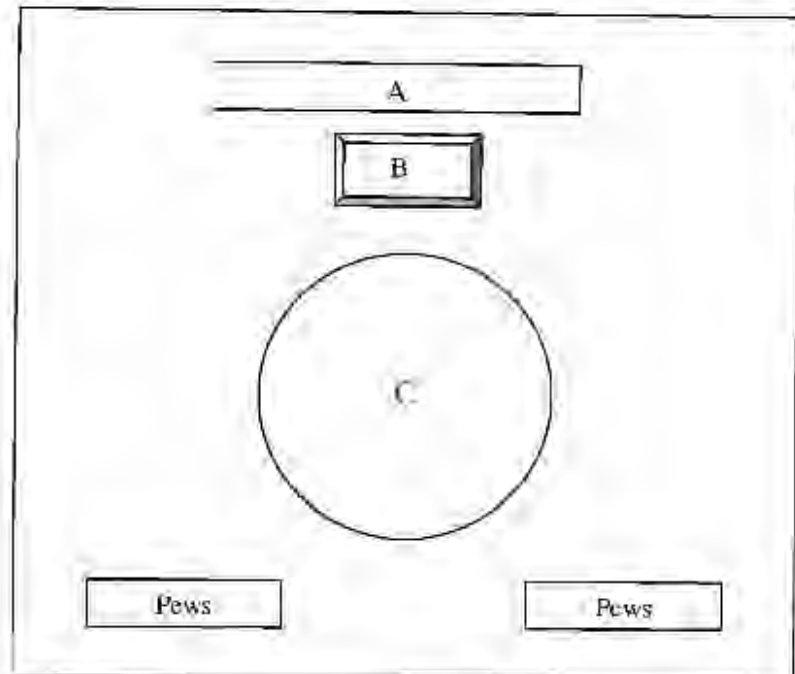
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<sup>299</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 139-143.

<sup>300</sup> Bishop Jackson maintains that although Black Hawk is invoked via verbal petition other spirits may also gain access to the temporal realm through the opened door. Therefore, he and other ministers must continuously exercise discernment throughout the service. See Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 17 February 2011, New Orleans; Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011.

<sup>301</sup> “Fast money blessing” incense and “prosperity” incense can also be burned in a Black Hawk service. Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011. Interestingly, the fast money blessing comes in a red/white/blue container (colors associated with Black Hawk) with two pictures of Native Americans adorned with a featured head dressing itched into the front side of canister.

A = Main Altar  
 B = Black Hawk Table  
 C = Cauldron (w/incense)



**Figure 20.** A schematic drawing of the petitioning of Black Hawk while in a circle formation around a smoking cauldron.

The encircled group sits directly in front of Black Hawk's special table. The statue of Black Hawk keeps a watchful eye over the petitioning participants. At this moment, the single red candle and the billowing column of smoke invokes the spirit of Black Hawk to continue to saturate the sanctuary with his presence. Bishop Jackson begins to sing an augmented version of "Meeting on the Old Camp Ground" and soon others join him in this serenade unto their Native American spirit guide:

Meeting tonight, meeting tonight, meeting on the old camp ground.  
 Meeting tonight, meeting tonight, meeting on the old camp ground.

Praying tonight, praying tonight, praying on the old camp ground.  
 Praying tonight, praying tonight, praying on the old camp ground.

Black Hawk tonight, Black Hawk tonight, Black Hawk on the old campground.  
 Black Hawk tonight, Black Hawk tonight, Black Hawk on the old campground.

Bishop Jackson maintains that repetition of these verses further ensures the activity of Black Hawk within the service. In an interview with Bishop Jackson, he talks about the

spontaneity of this part of the ritual. He recalls such a time when he moved out of the circle. “I sat in the middle of the circle [and] smoke[ed] all of the circle.”<sup>302</sup> Specifically, Bishop Jackson twirls a white handkerchief above his head three times to invoke Black Hawk. Then, he uses the same handkerchief to force smoke in the direction of each person in the circle. Once the spirit of Black Hawk is fully evoked, participants are lead by Bishop Jackson towards the table. Participants in exchange for an offering receive a seven-day candle. These candles have been blessed by Black Hawk. Some of the participants light their candles using the Black Hawk candle and place them on the church’s main altar.<sup>303</sup> While others opt to take their candles home to burn on their personal altar. No matter the choice. The candle blessed in this special service ensures the release of Black Hawk’s victory, protection, power, justice, and peace into the lived experiences of those who honored him each Friday night at St. Daniel S.C.

#### **Analysis of Black Hawk Service at St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1**

The “Black Hawk table” is a major focal point in the Black Hawk service at St. Daniel S.C. Participants focus on this table and its contents as they sing, pray, and testify. Healings and prophetic utterances are offered near the table. The Black Hawk table in this way serves as a dominant symbol in the ritual activities of the Black Hawk service. Although the focalizing point of many, the Black Hawk table is a creative product constructed through the creative energies of one person—Bishop Jackson. Bishop Jackson acknowledges his previous knowledge about color symbolism and object usage was obtained from the development classes Archbishop Caldwell and Bishop Hawkins.

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<sup>302</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011.

<sup>303</sup> Participants who do not have a personal Black Hawk altar in their homes is cited as one of the primary reasons why blessed candles are left on the church’s main altar.

He is adamant that he decides on what objects to use and how to arrange each one on the Black Hawk table, however. He selects. He arranges. In this way, the Black Hawk table is a product of intrasubjective creativity in that Bishop Jackson is solely responsible for transforming selected objects from external reality i.e. Spiritual church belief system in such a way as to yield a new creative product. For example, the Black Hawk statue taken from the Black Hawk altar, an altar also constructed by Bishop Jackson, is placed on the table. He possesses the freedom to move the object. He (dis)places Black Hawk—displaces it from its original position and places it in a new position. Also, instead of following the multiple light set-up for Black Hawk, Bishop Jackson utilizes a single red candle. Furthermore, he saturates the table with red and white “blessed candles.” The absence of black is a rarity for Black Hawk has now become associated with tri-colors of red, white, and black (blue serves as substitute). Although Bishop Jackson chooses material traditionally associated with Spiritual church doctrines concerning Black Hawk, he exerts his personal agency in the selection, alteration, and arrangement of objects in the creation of the table. He states, “Everyone honor him [Black Hawk] in a different way.”<sup>304</sup> Material selection and alteration of material afford Bishop Jackson outlets in which to exhibit a sense of personal agency. His special Black Hawk table may contain objects suggested by older Spiritual(ist) leaders, but these objects have undergone an alteration guided by the creative action of one individual, Bishop Jackson. Therefore, each item separately and table as a whole represent a concrete manifestation of a creative act guided by both the personal agency and unique contribution of Bishop Jackson. The Black Hawk table, although serving as a focal point in many of the service’s activities

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<sup>304</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011.

like healing, singing, and testifying, is a concrete actualization of Bishop Jackson's desire to define himself in a particular way. Namely, through the utilization of intrasubjective creativity, Bishop Jackson is able to create a product that exhibits his agency, uniqueness, and individuality—primary predicates signifying a personal mode of self known as the personal self.

After the healing/prophecy period of the Black Hawk service, the symbolic primacy is transferred from the table to the cast iron cauldron. The cauldron becomes the dominant symbol. As a dominant symbol, the cauldron possesses the ability to “unify disparate significata.”<sup>305</sup> Victor Turner in his work among Ndembu symbols explains this unification property of a dominant symbol:

The disparate *significata* are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. Such qualities or links of association may in themselves be quite trivial or random or widely distributed over a range of phenomena. Their very generality enables them to bracket together the most diverse ideas and phenomena. Thus, as we have seen, the milk tree stands for, *inter alia*, women's breast, motherhood, a novice at *Nkang's*, the principle of matrilingy, a specific matrilineage, learning, and the unity and persistence of Ndembu society. The themes of nourishment and dependence run through all these diverse *significata*.<sup>306</sup>

Like the milk tree in Ndembu society, the smoking cauldron possesses multiple meanings in the Black Hawk service. These meanings are manifested in the many roles played by this symbol. The cauldron serves two functions. First, the cauldron *unifies* all of those participating in the ritual. Bishop Jackson's placement of the cauldron in the middle of the floor results in the formation of a circle by the people. Although he initiates this action, collaborative action on behalf of participants brings about the actual formation of

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<sup>305</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 28.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

a circle. The cauldron functions as a signal to unify. Therefore, neither Bishop Jackson's role as pastor of St. Daniel S.C., nor his designation as creator of the special table are strong enough predicates during this moment of the ritual to differentiate him from the rest of the collective body. He is no longer an individual who defines himself through the use of personal agency and qualities of uniqueness. Bishop Jackson no longer sees himself as "I" but as "We." He undergoes a process of depersonalization. Such a process is characterized by, in the words of John C. Turner, "a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person."<sup>307</sup> It is the collective who petitions the intercessory action of the spirit of Black Hawk. "Black Hawk tonight, Black Hawk tonight; Black Hawk on the old campground." Their collective petitioning through song like that of the smoking incense rise in such a way as to invoke Black Hawk to release victory, protection, justice, and guidance unto the them as a whole. As an interchangeable member encircling the cauldron Bishop Jackson is given an opportunity to express a notion of self based upon collective collaborative action. Bishop Jackson sees himself as a member of the collective not a unique individual. He, then, in this way expresses a collective self. For he maintains, "I sit in the circle, too."<sup>308</sup>

In addition to the conjoining properties of the cauldron, this dominant symbol also disjoins. "Sometimes I smoke all the circle." The act of smoking the circle requires Bishop Jackson to break union with the circle. He differentiates himself from the group by moving towards the smoking cauldron located in the center of the circle. The cauldron

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<sup>307</sup> John C. Turner et al. *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 50.

<sup>308</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011.

in this way acts as a ritualized attractant. Situating his body near this dominant symbol represents a sporadic augmentation by Bishop Jackson of the natural flow of the Black Hawk service. He begins to twirl a white handkerchief above his head three times. The twirling of the handkerchief is meant to further invoke the spirit of Black Hawk. Unlike his participation in collective modes of invocation like singing, Bishop Jackson petitions the action of Black Hawk in his own way. He uses an object that no one else in the group possesses. He alone moves to the center of the circle and twirls the white handkerchief. Invocation is personalized. He asserts his own agency in the midst of collectivity. This ritualized form of exertion allows him “to enhance [his] individuality within the group” in such a way that he views himself, not as an interchangeable group member, but as “a unique person in terms of his individual differences from other persons.”<sup>309</sup> Bishop Jackson’s handkerchief twirling, although signaling an individualized form of action, also leads to a movement towards a collective benefit. Bishop Jackson not only desires to assert personal agency via his way of invoking Black Hawk, but he also desires to “smoke all the circle” or to direct smoke containing the evoked spirit of Black Hawk towards each participant. This duality of desires to separate from the group and to join this same group points to the ways in which the personal self and the collective self, respectively, are constantly competing for expression. For example, physical movement out of the circle towards the dominant ritual symbol and manipulation of a ritual object to petition spiritual action represent concrete manifestations of Bishop Jackson’s desire to separate from other participants. Bishop Jackson’s view himself as an individual petitioner is expressed while a view of himself as part of a meaning whole undergoes

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<sup>309</sup> John C. Turner et al., “Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20 (1994): 454-455.



repression. Although this attempt to forefront a view of himself leads to the repression of another equally desirable self-interpretation, the repressed self is not eliminated but always remains a possible mode of self that Bishop Jackson can seek as a tentative goal. For instance, Bishop Jackson, as stated, seeks to smoke the circle. He utilizes the handkerchief to forcefully push smoke billowing from the cauldron towards each member of the circle. He smokes the circle. He seeks to utilize the smoke as a means to re-establish his connectivity to the encircled participants while maintaining close proximity to the smoking cauldron. Bishop Jackson desires to smoke those of the group while maintaining a stance of differentiation. It is the smoking cauldron that affords Bishop Jackson the ability to move between two desired ways of viewing himself as either an interchangeable member of the group or a unique person differentiating from this same group. The smoking cauldron signifies the tensional interplay occurring between the collective self and the personal self, respectively. The cauldron is “dynamic.” It serves an intersectional point for Bishop Jackson’s desire to view himself as both “me” and “not-me.” In this way, the smoking cauldron affords him an opportunity to articulate a fluid and non-polar sense of self i.e. dynamical self that forms at the tensional intersectionality of collectivity/individuality. The cauldron, then, is a symbolic representation of Bishop Jackson’s desire to articulate complex ways of viewing himself. And, like the “milk tree” of Ndembu ritual it unifies diverse and oppositional meanings by establishing a thematic strand. Expressivity of various modes of self-interpretation is this “theme [that runs] through the disparate significata” of the Black Hawk ceremony at St. Daniel S.C.

## Black Hawk Ritual of Fellowship at St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1

“St. Daniel is not a Black Hawk church. I brought Black Hawk to St. Daniel.” Before Bishop Jackson became the pastor, St. Daniel S.C. did not honor Black Hawk. Although individual members may have honored this saint in their private residences, Black Hawk was not publicly acknowledged in the church. However, Bishop Jackson instituted both a weekly Black Hawk service and constructed a Black Hawk altar when he became pastor in 1989. While the former ceremony represents a communal honoring of Black Hawk, the latter serves as the focal point for a one-on-one fellowship ritual between Bishop Jackson and his Native American spiritual guide.

The Black Hawk altar plays a central role in the ritual of fellowship. Therefore, its placement as well as its constituent parts are worth examining in detail. See Figure 21.<sup>310</sup>



**Figure 21.** “All Saints” altar and “Black Hawk” altar of St. Daniel Spiritual Church, No. 1 in New Orleans, 1990s. Photo: Bishop Daniel Jackson.



**Figure 22.** Close up image of the “Black Hawk” altar featured in figure 20. Photo: Stephen Wehmeyer.

This altar finds a home against the back wall of the church next to the entry door. Bishop Jackson’s placement of this altar to the immediate left of the door is intentional. The door

<sup>310</sup> Daniel Jackson, “All Saints Altar and Black Hawk Altar at St. Daniel Spiritual Church,” late 1990s, photo.

here symbolizes two entranceways—one leading from the temporal realm and another from the spiritual realm. Black Hawk like Ellegua is positioned at the crossroads where converging paths meet. Both are guardians of doorways.<sup>311</sup> Black Hawk, in the words of Bishop Jackson, “works doors.” He stands on guard at the door. Stephen Wehmeyer, in his work on Native American usage in American Spiritualism offers a vivid description of this Black Hawk altar in St. Daniel S.C.:

Somewhat dwarfed by the giant St. Rita but still clearly visible, Black Hawk takes his characteristic stance. He is the center of a dense concentration of images and paraphernalia that constitute his own separate altar. Black Hawk stands on a small table covered in swatches of red cloth with blue diamonds and white diagonals at each corner. Against his upright arm, three toy spears are propped in a tripod formation: the overt components in an arsenal for spiritual defense. A chromolithograph of a victorious St. George rest against his knee. The figure itself is uncharacteristically pale, although the darkly painted pupils stand out fiercely against the light skin tone, making his eyes visible from some distance. In addition to his molded war bonnet, he is crowned with a custom headdress of fur and tall bright plumes. The altar is flanked by two glistening American flags...At the feet of the statue [is] a pipe, tall vessel of water, framed photos of Mother Anderson and Archbishop Daniels. A brightly painted seated Indian figure rests opposite a laughing white Buddha...<sup>312</sup> See Figure 22.<sup>313</sup>

The Black Hawk statue’s right arm is fixed in an upright position in such a way that his right hand rests above his eyes. Such a stance illustrates the watchfulness of Black Hawk. The colorful plumes, spears, and war bonnet are symbols of war. The tri-color symbolism of red, white, and blue found throughout the altar signify victory, purity, and peace, respectively. Two American flags also reinforce Black Hawk’s ability to secure all three of these conditions in the lives of those who petition and honor him. Both Mother

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<sup>311</sup> David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 172.

<sup>312</sup> Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries,” 148-149.

<sup>313</sup> Wehmeyer, “Indian Altars of the Spiritual Church, 66, photo.

Anderson (founder of New Orleans Spiritualist churches) and Archbishop Daniels (former pastor of St. Daniel S.C.) are reminders of the Spiritual(ist) legacy.<sup>314</sup> Their photos continuously stress the importance of protecting and transmitting the Spiritual(ist) belief system to the next generation. The photo of Mother Anderson also serves as a symbolic reminder that through her Black Hawk was introduced to New Orleans Spiritualist churches. Thus, much like the photo of Alourdes's mother Philomise Macena posted outside of her altar room, Mother Anderson carefully watches over the ritual activities occurring at the Black Hawk altar.<sup>315</sup> All of these altar objects, some visible while others hidden, are pregnant with meaning. And, it here at this colorful altar that Bishop Jackson enters into a personal ritual of fellowship with Black Hawk with hopes of tapping into these meanings in such a way that they are released into his everyday life experiences.

This fellowship ritual between Bishop Jackson and Black Hawk contains two phases: (1) spiritual invocation and (2) spiritual working. *Spiritual invocation* is the first stage of the ritual. Various mediums are utilized to invoke the spirit or to call the spirit of Black Hawk into action. Food serves as one such way to invoke Black Hawk. "Every Tuesday, when I'm here, I generally cook him a pot of red beans." Red beans and rice represent two of the three symbolic colors associated with Black Hawk, red symbolizing power/victory and white representing purity, respectively. Both the color of the food and the aroma rising from the pot serve as evoking methods. Bishop Jackson evokes by

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<sup>314</sup> These two figures can also represent spiritual guides. According to the Spiritual(ist) belief system, spiritual guides can include but it not limited to deceased friends, family, patron saints, angels, and even past church leaders like Mother Anderson and Archbishop Daniels. See Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 127.

<sup>315</sup> Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 290.

appealing to senses of sight and smell. Since the Spiritual tradition teaches the existence of life beyond death, appellation in this manner is not beyond reason. According to long-time Spiritual(ist) leader Archbishop Johnson, “[The] spirit never dies. It passes out of the body but it doesn’t die. Spirit is alive all the time...”<sup>316</sup> Therefore, human senses along with such physiological desires like appetite continue to exist even after death. “And if I’m hungry, I fix two plates. I fix a plate for him and a plate for me.” This mode of symbolic consumption are invocatory and offertory in nature. Although Bishop Jackson consumes both plates, one is offered to Black Hawk before consumption, and the process of embodying the food further evokes his spiritual guide. Consumption is a participatory act of honor. Food set-apart for Black Hawk is marked as an offering. The ritual consuming of this food is a way of honoring Black Hawk. The actual carrying out this act in turn invokes the spirit of Black Hawk. In addition to food, Bishop Jackson may use stimulants such as coffee to evoke Black Hawk. Bishop Jackson states, “Or [sometimes] I’ll fix a cup of coffee in the morning, and just come up here and drink it with him.” Coffee is considered a strong invoking agent for spirits in some African religions of the Diaspora. For example in Santería, coffee, water, and food are left behind a door in the house to honor and evoke the *eggun*—collective representation of a family’s ancestors.<sup>317</sup> “A white saucer of wheat flour, a box of powdered rice, a bottle of kola, a cup of *coffee* [emphasis added], a hair brush, a comb, a tuft, and a bottle of perfume” are

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<sup>316</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 128.

<sup>317</sup> Migene González-Wippler, *Santería: The Religion, Faith, Rites, Magic* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2004), 6.

items offered to Dangbala in Haitian Vodou.<sup>318</sup> Similarly Bishop Jackson uses coffee along with food offerings to awaken the spirit of Black Hawk.

Reciprocated action on behalf of Black Hawk in response to Bishop Jackson's ritual acts in the spiritual invocation phase signals a transitioning into the second phase of the fellowship ritual, *spiritual working*. Bishop Jackson in an interview cites examples of Black Hawk's reciprocated action, a reaction of a spirit in response to a petitioner's methods of invocation. He states, "You might smell coffee, you might smell tobacco, you might smell fresh corn...something like that. Sometimes you might smell red beans, and there's nobody cooking red beans." Black Hawk utilizes some of the same evoking methods of Bishop Jackson to respond. Through an appellation of smell Black Hawk communicates to Bishop Jackson that he is present. Thus, the smell of cooking food in the absence of actual cooking represents a concrete sign of Black Hawk's presence. Presence does not equate to a posture to receive petitions. Bishop Jackson maintains that getting what you want from Black Hawk involves utilizing items like tobacco and alcohol. These items are not only placed on the Black Hawk altar at St. Daniel S.C., but they also undergo constant manipulation at the hands of Bishop Jackson. On some occasions Bishop Jackson sits near the altar and smokes a pipe resting on the Black Hawk altar. "Indians used to love to smoke pipes."<sup>319</sup> Other times, he uses alcohol to entertain Black Hawk in order to earn favors from his spiritual guide. "You see I put a can of beer on the altar...Black Hawk, we entertain him with wine sometimes. We can entertain him

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<sup>318</sup> Andre J. Louis, *Voodoo in Haiti: Catholicism, Protestantism, and a Model of Effective Ministry in the Context of Voodoo in Haiti* (Mustang: Tate Publishing, 2007), 83-84.

<sup>319</sup> Wehmeyer, "Red Mysteries," 152.

with black coffee and a little whiskey...when you make him drunk, he'll do anything.”<sup>320</sup>

Intoxication indicates a temporary impairment of faculties. Black Hawk in this state is willing to grant Bishop Jackson's petitions. Success in court cases, protection of his children, financial abundance, and continual guidance are petitions placed at the feet of Black Hawk during this point in the ritual process. Black Hawk symbolizes justice, watchfulness, peace, and guidance in the Spiritual(ist) tradition. Thus, Bishop Jackson knows engaging in ritualized fellowship with his Native American spiritual guide at his altar at St. Daniel S.C. yields such desired outcomes.

### **Analysis of Black Hawk Ritual of Fellowship at St. Daniel Spiritual Church**

Ritualized fellowship between Bishop Jackson and Black Hawk involves the invocation of the latter by the former. Bishop Jackson uses “transformed objects” to evoke the spirit of Black Hawk. A transformed object is one possessing the ability to be “refashioned, altered, or transformed so that [it] may assume new and important social and cultural functions.”<sup>321</sup> Bishop Jackson utilizes a dichotomic form of intrasubjective creativity to capture and magnify the transformative properties of everyday objects used in the ritual of fellowship. In this way, objects are transformed through the use of two creative actions: (1) selection and (2) displacement. Bishop Jackson's selection of mundane objects initiates the transformative process. Bishop Jackson chooses red beans, rice, coffee, alcohol, and tobacco. All of these items are included in his ritualized fellowship with Black Hawk. Choice is premised upon his *personal* interpretation of Spiritual doctrinal beliefs concerning object usage in private rituals with Black Hawk. Therefore,

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<sup>320</sup> Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries,” 157-158.

<sup>321</sup> George Basalla, “Transformed Utilitarian Objects,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (1982): 183.

objects selected by Bishop Jackson may or may not totally align with objects utilized by other Spiritual people who solicit private fellowship with Black Hawk. For example, Bishop Oliver Coleman selects water and fruit, while another Spiritual member of Antioch Spiritual Church chooses “harvest products [like] corn, potatoes, green peas, snap beans, [and] squash.”<sup>322</sup> Both Spiritual adherents seek personal fellowship with Black Hawk but select different objects to facilitate this sought after ritualistic union. Like these two Spiritual adherents, Bishop Jackson exercises his freedom to select objects. His choice of objects like beans, rice, coffee, and alcohol allows him to differentiate himself from other Spiritual adherents’ object selection/usage in personal fellowship rituals with Black Hawk. This ritualized form of personal differentiation offers Bishop Jackson an opportunity to express a view of himself that is not premised upon a collective consensus on object usage in private Black Hawk rituals. Therefore, Bishop Jackson expresses a personalized notion of self (personal self) through the selection of objects to be utilized in fellowship with his Native American spiritual guide.

Once object selection is complete, Bishop Jackson displaces each of them. This act of displacement signals the start of the second step of the process used to create transformed objects. In displacement the object is divested of its normal function and inherits a new usage by means of physical movement. Two plates of red beans and rice are moved from the kitchen of St. Daniel S.C. and placed on the altar of Black Hawk. Coffee like the red beans and rice also finds temporary refuge on the altar. “I’ll fix a cup of coffee in the morning, and just come up here [to the altar] and drink it with him.”

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<sup>322</sup> For a description of Bishop Coleman’s personal Black Hawk altar, see Stephen C. Wehmeyer, “Indian Altars of the Spiritual Church: Kongo Echoes in New Orleans,” *African Arts* 33 (2000): 69. The second account can be found in Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire*, 135.



Bishop Jackson does not consume the coffee in the kitchen area; instead, he takes it to the altar and drinks it with his Native American spiritual guide. In moving these consumables from the kitchen to the Black Hawk altar, Bishop Jackson strips these objects of their “utilitarian” function and ordains them with new functions.<sup>323</sup> Such displacement disrupts the stable bond formerly existing between form and function by interjecting an alternative function that is foreign to the initial function. Bishop Jackson consumes the red beans, rice, and coffee at the altar. The function of these consumables to solely provide nourishment has been stripped and replaced with a new function. Red beans, rice, and coffee now serve as invoking agents in that they are meant to arouse Black Hawk to act in a reciprocated manner towards Bishop Jackson as the petitioner. A new function is associated with these displaced objects. Consumption of food and drink along with the smoking of a pipe are now invocatory acts. No longer do these items function for secular purposes but through selection and displacement have been transformed into symbols endowed with religious purpose and meaning. Bishop Jackson’s acts of selection and displacement—two-step process of intrasubjective creativity—lead to the creation of *transformed* religious objects. Red beans, rice, and tobacco “have been elevated to a new status through a process of transformation” guided by the creative actions of Bishop Jackson.<sup>324</sup> He alone transforms selected elements into new creative products expressed in the form of transformed objects. Therefore, Bishop Jackson utilizes intrasubjective creativity to exert a degree of personal agency that may not always be available in public celebrations of Black Hawk. He strategically chooses, displaces, and transforms everyday objects as well as endows them with religious value in order to set his way of ritual

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<sup>323</sup> Basalla, “Transformed Utilitarian Objects,” 183.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 186.

fellowship with Black Hawk apart from that of collective forms. In this way, ritualized fellowship with Black Hawk serves as a creative medium in which Bishop Jackson's desire to express a view himself in light of his individuality and uniqueness becomes a manifested reality.

### **Black Hawk Healing Ritual at Bishop Daniel Jackson's "Working Altar"**

During my last research visit to New Orleans in February 2011, I spent a considerable amount of time at the home at Bishop Jackson. Most of our time was spent at the "kitchen table." This small wooden table became the place where we snacked on cookies and almonds together. It was here that he held two grandbabies in his arms at the same time. While this table served as place of familial gathering and communal eating, the kitchen table also represented the place where Bishop Jackson shared with me mysteries concerning the Spiritual(ist) traditions in general and New Orleans in particular. I listened to a historical narrative of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches filled with names, events, and locations that have not been captured in scholarly literature on the movement. The distinctions between patron saints, miracle working saints, and spiritual guides I recorded at the kitchen table. (Even esoteric knowledge I was instructed to keep off record, I absorbed at this place.) Out of all of these nuggets of knowledge, our conversations on altars and rituals used in healings became the frequent topic of most of our "table" talks. The table was a place of erudition. But even more than its pedagogical role, I would learn in a phone interview with Bishop Jackson that the "kitchen table" plays a vital role in private Black Hawk healing rituals performed in his home. Thus, the table serves as the initiating point of the ritual process of healing through Black Hawk.

This Black Hawk healing ritual process consists of four distinct phases: (1) evaluative phase, (2) invocative phase, (3) restorative phase, and (4) prescriptive phase. Consultation with potential candidates for healing occurs at the kitchen table in Bishop Jackson's house. It is here that the client describes their conditions. Bishop Jackson listens: the client speaks. Not only does he listen with his natural ear, but also Bishop Jackson keeps his spiritual ear attuned to the movement of the spiritual world. This latter form of listening, in his words, "is a discerning spirit [that] look in the spirit." Therefore, discernment is characterized by multiple senses of hearing and seeing. By the end of the client's description, he makes a decision based on what his spirit of discernment reveals concerning the client's intentions, whether motives are good or evil. If the latter, Bishop Jackson "shows them the door." However, if the former, he takes the person as a client. An accepted client is ushered into a room adjacent to the kitchen known as the "working room." This movement represents a transitional point in that it signals the ending of the evaluative phase and the beginning of the invocatory phase of the healing ritual process. The "working room" is the heart of the entire Black Hawk healing process. Its importance lies in its location. "We are closer to the door." This room, then, places both Bishop Jackson and his client in a position near what he calls "a spiritual door." This door is not like the front door that Bishop Jackson showed rejected potential clients after the completion of their "kitchen table" consultation. Instead, it takes the physical form of a "working altar." The altar is a concrete object signifying as a symbolic boundary controlling access between realms of temporality and spirituality. It is at this altar that Bishop Jackson and his client stand, one seeking a curative response from the spiritual

side of the door and the other accepting the possibilities of a curative manifestation on the temporal side, respectively.

Bishop Jackson's working altar embodies a type of symbolic complexity awaiting interpretation. His altar is like a "text, there for the reading."<sup>325</sup> Such a reading reveals a tri-level structural storyline filled with saints, angels, flowers, candles, oils, and chromolithographs. See figure 23.<sup>326</sup>



**Figure 23.** "Working Altar" at the home of Bishop Jackson in New Orleans, 2011. Photo: Margarita Guillory.

The bottom-most level of the working altar contains a vast array of photographs, including Bishop Jackson, his mother, and other family members; a colorful print of the

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<sup>325</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 41.

<sup>326</sup> Margarita Simon Guillory, "Bishop Jackson's Working Altar," 2011, photo.

blessed mother with Infant Jesus; two small boxes containing novenas and other prescriptive items hidden from the eye (black box on the right belonged to Mother Kate Francis)<sup>327</sup>; liquid tobacco oil i.e. Black Hawk oil; a vivid plaque of a Christianized depiction of the seven African powers; and a multi-colored wooden plaque of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Statues of the blessed mother, St. Joseph, Uriel, Buddha, and St. Michael the Archangel along with blessed oil, waters, and an assortment of libations make the middle level of the working altar their home. While a host of saints, including St. Ann, St. Anthony, St. Jude, St. Joseph, and Black Hawk, take their post on the upper-most level among the goblets of water, vases of artificial flowers, a candle lamp with a red bulb, a green votive candle, and a concealed bottle of liquor. A wooden staff adorned with a red handkerchief and colored ribbons is positioned in a way that it spans all three levels of the altar, representing a form of symbolic collapsing of them into an single representation. In addition to possessing multidimensionality, this particular altar is significant because it has a rich history. The portion of the altar covered in gray paint belonged to Mother Dora Tyson, and was an original part of the interior structure of Eternal Love Christian Faith, No. 1 (located 2123 Clio Street) during the 1930s.<sup>328</sup> The altar was then passed down to Mother Cornelia Flower, one of her co-workers. After the closing of Mother Tyson's church, Mother Flower took the altar to her home. Soon after

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<sup>327</sup> Mother Kate Francis also kept this box in the right corner of her altar. See Robert McKinney, "When the Thunder is Over Mother Kate Francis Will March Right Through Hebbin's Door," Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 229), 10.

<sup>328</sup> Federal writers Breaux and Robert McKinney described this altar in the following manner: "The main altar is to left center, with a statue of the Sacred Heart in the center. On the sides are statues of the Holy Family and the Black Hawk." See "The Eternal Christian Love, No. 1 (Negro)," Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Watson Memorial Library, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (Federal Writers Project Collection, Folder 36), 1.

she would join St. Daniel Spiritual Church, and its here that she met Bishop Jackson. The altar along with the gray painted of statues (figure 5) the blessed mother, St. Michael, St. Joseph, and St. Anthony were formally willed to Bishop Jackson and have been in his possession since the early 1980s. Others have stood before this altar for over seventy years, but today Bishop Jackson brings those who have requested healing to stand at this historically significant altar filled with objects of old and new. For it is at this spiritual door that the second phase of ritual healing through Black Hawk begins.<sup>329</sup>

Much like Bishop Jackson's ritual of personal fellowship, this second phase of ritualistic healing involves the invocation of Black Hawk. Bishop Jackson lights incense in the same cauldron used during the Black Hawk service at St. Daniel Spiritual Church. Both the aroma and smoke are meant, in the words of Bishop Jackson, "to call the spirit of Black Hawk in."<sup>330</sup> Sometimes Bishop Jackson places a cup of coffee with whiskey near the burning incense in order to further evoke Black Hawk. Other times he invokes this Native American spirit through the direct use of altar objects. For example, twirling a white, red, or black (color of Black Hawk) handkerchief and working colored ribbons are two forms of object manipulation he employs to evoke his spiritual guide Black Hawk. A more forceful way of calling Black Hawk to action involves *knocking*—to physically knock on the altar. "If I need something quick I twist [the] handkerchief hard or knock

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<sup>329</sup> According to Bishop Jackson, all saints can be used for healing; however, he primarily uses Black Hawk and St. Michael the archangel to heal his clients. Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 16 February 2011, New Orleans.

<sup>330</sup> Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 16 February 2011, New Orleans. This information was re-confirmed by means of a second interview concerning healing through the petitioning of Black Hawk. Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 9 March 2011.

with the cane,” maintains Bishop Jackson.<sup>331</sup> Thus, the manipulation of handkerchiefs and knocking with the cane serve as methods to invoke Black Hawk. But more than this, they attest to the need of an immediate intervention from Black Hawk. Bishop Jackson also calls forth the spirit of Black Hawk by praying over his client. “Who better than to go to the saints?” Through prayer Bishop Jackson “asks him [Black Hawk] to intercede” on his client’s behalf. His prayer not only serves to “quicken the saint,” but it also serves as a point of transition into the third phase of this ritual process.

During the restorative phase, the client is either anointed with oil or cleansed with water. “Black Hawk,” according to Bishop Jackson, “determines the direction.” Black Hawk, in the words of Bishop Jackson, “speaks to my subconscious mind and tells me what to do.”<sup>332</sup> The subconscious mind is defined as the innermost part of the mind.<sup>333</sup> It is here that Bishop Jackson maintains that he hears an inner voice offering directions to take in private healing rituals. If the determining prescription is hydrotic cleansing Bishop Jackson immediately retrieves a basin of tap water and places it on the altar. After praying over the water, he lays hands on his client’s head and then washes them in the basin of water. This act symbolizes a “washing off of the conditions picked up through

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<sup>331</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 26 February 2011.

<sup>332</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 25 March 2011.

<sup>333</sup> Bishop Jackson maintains that the spiritual world is constantly attempting to get messages to the temporal realm via an individual’s inner mind; however, he asserts that “a messed up mind” prevents such messages. For him, the mind must be in a relaxed state in order for messages to be heard in the inner mind. In this way, the Spiritual(ist) conception of the subconscious mind is similar to Freud’s notion of the unconscious. Particularly, in that, the unconscious contains repressed impulses that are released during the relaxation of an individual’s repressive barrier. See Sigmund Freud, “The Unconscious,” in *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Mortimer J. Adler (Chicago: William Benton, 1952): 428-443.

physical contact.”<sup>334</sup> A fellow Spiritual healer of New Orleans discusses the importance of water in healing rituals:

I touched her[;] she had arthritis. I got arthritis now. Because I didn’t know how to throw it off. When I finished healing her, I could hardly move... I did not know how to throw it off. See, you supposed to use *water*, when you are having a healing...<sup>335</sup>

Water acts as a transference agent. Through physical contact Bishop Jackson disembodies his client’s illness, however, this condition is transferred unto his body. Washing with water affords transference of the illness from Bishop Jackson’s body into the basin. If the spirit of Black Hawk leads him in the direction of healing by means of anointing, Bishop Jackson removes his tobacco oil from the altar (see figure 3). Liquid tobacco further invokes Black Hawk. He anoints his hands and rubs them together three times, places his hands on the forehead of the client, and through prayer petitions Black Hawk to intercede on behalf of his client.

Whether by water or oil, this stage of the third phase of ritual healing reveals two distinct moments of intercessory action. Bishop Jackson invokes Black Hawk and in the presence of this spirit petitions healing. He stands as an intermediary between his client and the spirit of Black Hawk. Mother Tyson discussed the importance of such a stance in a 1939 interview with Robert McKinney. She states, “Ah go in between Black Hawk an dem...Black Hawk will work fo me for he will work for dem. Cause Ah’m closer to him.”<sup>336</sup> Therefore, because Black Hawk is one of Bishop Jackson’s primary spiritual guides, their relationship places the latter in a position to petition the former for special

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<sup>334</sup> Daniel William Jackson, interview by Margarita Simon Guillory, 16 February 2011, New Orleans.

<sup>335</sup> Dianteill, *La Samaritaine Noire*, 140.

<sup>336</sup> McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk,” 5.



favors like that of healing. Bishop Jackson's confidence in this matter is a Spiritual trait that has been passed down through instrumental figures in the movement like Bishop Jules Anderson who asserts, "[If] I have problems...I can call on my spirit guides to intercede for me."<sup>337</sup> Accordingly, Black Hawk intercedes on behalf of Bishop Jackson's request for healing on behalf of his client. Bishop Jackson commissions the act of healing based upon Black Hawk's intercession. And, the manifestation of the healing comes through Black Hawk because he is an "earth-bound" spirit.<sup>338</sup> "God does it [the healing] through Black Hawk," stresses Bishop Jackson.<sup>339</sup>

The giving of prophetic utterances or the prescribing of specific novenas signals the movement into the last phase of the ritual. The former represents a message from Black Hawk delivered through Bishop Jackson who acts as a medium. The latter involves Bishop Jackson giving the client a novena card or a verbal novena to follow. No matter the prescriptive form, Black Hawk makes the determination.

#### **Analysis of Black Hawk Healing Ritual at Bishop Jackson's "Working Altar"**

Movement from the consultation phase to the invocatory phase denotes a shift in location. Bishop Jackson and his client move from a secular space i.e. kitchen to a sacred space i.e. working room. Here the process of differentiation characterizes sacredness. Therefore, the working room is considered sacred because it has been "set apart from an ordinary environment to provide an area for the performance of controlled 'extraordinary' patterns

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<sup>337</sup> Jacobs and Kaslow, *Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 127.

<sup>338</sup> A great discussion of the classification of spirits can be found in Jacobs and Kaslow, *Spiritual Churches of New Orleans*, 129.

<sup>339</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 9 March 2011.

of actions.”<sup>340</sup> The working room, then, serves as the designated space where Bishop Jackson carries out the remaining three phases—invocation, restoration, and completion—of the healing ritual process.

In the second phase of the healing process, Bishop Jackson utilizes various objects and acts to invoke the spirit of Black Hawk. A cauldron filled with incense, a cup of coffee laced with strong whiskey, a red, white, or blue handkerchief, and long strings of multi-colored ribbons serve as invoking agents. Bishop Jackson also uses knocking and praying to evoke Black Hawk. In his usage of certain objects and acts, Bishop Jackson aligns himself with the Spiritual(ist) doctrine of healing through Black Hawk. For example, his employment of a white handkerchief represents a continuation of the teachings of Bishop Hawkins of St. Anthony Divine Spiritual Temple of Christ. For “twirling a white handkerchief” is a sure way to cause Black Hawk “to appear in the doorway.”<sup>341</sup> He continues the tradition of calling forth spirits in general and Black Hawk in particular through the Spiritual(ist) tradition of ritualistic knocking. For example, adherents of Israelite Divine Spiritual Church perform ritual knocking. They “knock resoundingly three times, honoring the saints and rousing them to action.”<sup>342</sup> Prayers petitioning Black Hawk’s intervention also finds a place in Bishop Jackson’s healing performance. Such prayers resemble those early Spiritualist leaders like Mother Tyson who shared the ways in which she prayed to her “dear Black” Hawk with a federal writer

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<sup>340</sup> David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 9.

<sup>341</sup> Daniel William Jackson, telephone interview with Margarita Simon Guillory, 2 March 2011.

<sup>342</sup> Wehmeyer, “Red Mysteries,” 192.

in the late 1930s.<sup>343</sup> While Bishop Jackson maintains a degree of solidarity with the collective consensus concerning the invocation of Black Hawk, his usage of other non-traditional invoking agents serve means of differentiating him from this same collective. For instance, Bishop Jackson employs ribbons to evoke Black Hawk during this second stage of ritual healing. “I work through ribbons,” maintains Bishop Jackson. See figure 24 and figure 25.<sup>344</sup>



**Figure 24.** “Working Altar” of Bishop Jackson. Notice stick with handkerchief and ribbons attached. New Orleans, 2011. Photo: Margarita Guillory.



**Figure 25.** Working ribbons and a handkerchief sent to author. Photo: Margarita Guillory

According to him, the manipulation of ribbons—particularly the working of a red, white, and blue ribbon—like the twirling of a white handkerchief “quickens” the actions of Black Hawk in the healing process. Bishop Jackson also utilizes a wooden walking stick to invoke Black Hawk through knocking. Although knocking with one’s fist is traditionally used in many Spiritual(ist) churches, Bishop Jackson alters this process by

<sup>343</sup> McKinney, “Saint Black Hawk...Indian Worshipped by Spiritualists,” 3.

<sup>344</sup> Margarita Simon Guillory, “Bishop Jackson’s Working Altar” and “Evoking Handkerchief and Ribbons,” 2011, photos.

using as stick to perform this action. See figure 23. Such alteration leads to the emergence of a new method that is an extension of the original act of knocking. No other scholarly work covering invocatory practices of New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches have covered the use of objects like that of a ribbon or a stick in the ritualized acts of invocation. Therefore, usage of such objects is Bishop Jackson's unique contributions to Spiritual(ist) doctrinal principles of spirit invocation. *Ribbon* working and *stick* knocking are acts of intrapersonal creativity in that they represent new methods i.e. creative products created by Bishop Jackson to initiate spiritual assistance in the healing process. Both ribbon and stick are "instrumental objects."<sup>345</sup> For these objects allow Bishop Jackson to assert a sense of personal agency within the ritual space of healing. Such an exertion of personal agency within intrapersonal forms of creativity allows Bishop Jackson to express a notion of personal self—a view of himself premised upon his distinguishing characteristics. Therefore, the second phase of ritual healing through Black Hawk serves as a creative outlet in which Bishop Jackson expresses himself through his unique contributions to the Spiritual(ist) doctrine of spirit invocation.

Like the invocatory phase of ritual healing, the restorative phase of this same ritual serves as a creative medium where Bishop Jackson is able to construct a definition of self. The third phase of healing is characterized by the "laying on of hands." Whether through the use of hydrotic cleansing or oil anointing, interaction between Bishop Jackson and his client during this phase is posited as a ritualized encounter. Both parties in this form of encounter "contribute to a *single* over-all definition which involves not so

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<sup>345</sup> David Morgan, "Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religions," in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. David Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2010), 72.

much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored.”<sup>346</sup> Such a consensus requires establishing a solitary point of agreement that governs the interaction.<sup>347</sup> For example, Bishop Jackson anoints his client’s head with Black Hawk oil. The actual ritual performance in and of itself signals the presence of a collaborative agreement between Bishop Jackson and his client. Bishop Jackson carries out the method because of his confidence in Black Hawk’s ability to decide on matters of restorative acts involved in the healing process. In his words, “Black Hawk determines the direction.” The client receives the anointing, an action signifying the client’s confidence in the ability of the spirit of Black Hawk to work through Bishop Jackson to bring about healing. A consensus is formed here between the two ritual participants concerning Black Hawk’s role in determining the restorative method in this phase of the healing ritual. Black Hawk in this way serves as connective point. Joined by their common belief in Black Hawk abilities, Bishop Jackson and his client stand united before the working altar. Belief being understood here as “the formation and maintenance of a consensus or community of feeling, in which the self one performs with the community is the self one wishes to be recognized.”<sup>348</sup> Therefore, the formation of a consensus between Bishop Jackson and his client allows for the expression of a collective self. Both parties see themselves as individuals who are collaborative parts making up a meaningful whole. Particularly Bishop Jackson during the anointing and cleansing portion of the restorative phase is able to articulate a view of himself is not premised upon his unique contributions. Instead, he

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<sup>346</sup> Morgan, “Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religions,” 65.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

expresses a notion of self larger than his individuality expressed in the form of a collective self.

While the restorative phase of the healing process is used as medium by Bishop Jackson to express a collective view of himself, this phase combined with the invocatory phase serves as a projective site, displaying competing notions of personal and collective selves. Physical contact coupled by a consensus of belief as exhibited in the performance of ritual cleansing and anointing provides a means for Bishop Jackson to express a collective sense of self. Such privileging of the collective self represses the personal self—a notion of self premised upon his unique contributions to spirit invocation practices—that Bishop Jackson previously asserted in the invocatory phase of the healing process. Although repressed, the personal self is not totally eliminated but always remains a *possible* mode of self that Bishop Jackson can express. An example of this type of returning of the “repressed” personal self occurs within the prescriptive phase of ritual healing. Although Bishop Jackson forms a “working consensus” with his client in the third phase, he differentiates himself from his client in the terminating phase either through the use of prophetic utterances and/or novenas.<sup>349</sup> “Sometimes prophecy follows,” maintains Bishop Jackson. Prophecy given during this phase, much like that of invocative and restorative phases, requires the participatory action from the spirit of Black Hawk. “Prophecy comes from the spirit world.” These words of Bishop Jackson are confirmed by Spiritual(ist) leader Archbishop B.S. Johnson who states, “Prophecy is something which comes through the divine spirit force.”<sup>350</sup> It is Black Hawk who speaks through Bishop Jackson during the prophetic portion of the healing ritual. This ability to

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<sup>349</sup> Morgan, “Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religions,” 65.

<sup>350</sup> Smith, *Spirit World*, 45.

channel Black Hawk differentiates him from his client who is only able to receive messages. Therefore, prophecy counteracts ritualistic collectivity established between Bishop Jackson and his client during the restorative phase and forefronts the uniqueness of Bishop Jackson. The prophetic moment of the prescriptive phase, then, affords Bishop Jackson the opportunity to express a view of himself based upon his unique ability to receive prophetic words from Black Hawk during this one-on-one healing ritual. Bishop Jackson last expressed this personal notion of self in the invocatory stage (second stage) ritual healing. Therefore, the prescriptive phase of the Black Hawk healing ritual serves as an outlet for the return of the repressed personal self.

An examination of the last three phases—invocation, restoration, and prescription—of the Black Hawk healing ritual reveals an antagonistic relationship between Bishop Jackson's selves. For example, while Bishop Jackson enjoys viewing himself as distinguishable from others because of his unique evoking methods in the invocatory phase, this personal self is repressed by the formulation of a ritualized consensus between him and his client in the restorative phase of the Black Hawk healing ritual. This consensus allows Bishop Jackson to articulate a notion of self premised upon collectivity. However, the repressed personal self returns in the terminating stage of this process. Bishop Jackson utilizes prophecy and novenas as "acts of differentiation" to forefront a view of himself based upon his uniqueness and his individuality.<sup>351</sup> This presence of expression and repression in the ritual process of healing captures an antagonistic relationship existing between the personal self and collective self. More importantly, Bishop Jackson's movement between a definition of himself based upon

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<sup>351</sup> Morgan, "Materiality, Social Analysis, and the Study of Religions," 64.

either solidarity or differentiation captures another more fluid form of self—a dynamical self. The dynamical self is manifested at the in-between transitional acts of retrieving water for cleansing, rubbing of the hands with Black Hawk oil, and removing hands off of the client’s body. These ritualistic moments symbolize points of intersectionality in which Bishop Jackson expresses a view of himself as a compilation of dualities—“and/both” and “me/not-me” representations of self. Accordingly, this ritualized capturing of this dynamical self reveals an even greater desire present in the actions of Bishop Jackson. Whether through public ceremonies, one-on-one fellowship rituals, and/or private healing rituals, Bishop Jackson employs Black Hawk as a medium to push toward a viewing of himself in a multidimensional way. Black Hawk as “master symbol” provides creative outlets robust enough for Bishop Jackson to express a complex mode of self characterized by an interconnectivity of personal, collective, and dynamical selves.



## Conclusion

### Guiding Arguments and Major Implications of *Creative Selves*

Three arguments have served as the driving force propelling *Creating Selves: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Self and Creativity in African American Religion*.

First, this dissertation argues for a multidimensional model of self. Utilizing social psychological approaches to self, three modes of self are offered in chapter two. The personal self, collective self, and dynamical self are self-interpretations used by individuals to formulate multiple definitions of themselves. Collective and personal self-interpretations, this dissertation has shown, are manifestations of an individual's dual desire for social solidarity and individual differentiation, respectively. Shared categorical membership serves as the basis for the collective self. Expression of this form of self involves a greater emphasis being placed on common collective features, which results in the depersonalization of the individual. No longer is the individual set apart by distinguishable markers. Instead, the individual formulates a view of him/herself premised on shared group attributes. Unlike the collective self, the personal self is based upon the unique predicates of the individual. The individual utilizes distinguishing markers to assert a definition of him/herself. The individual, then, differentiates him/herself from a group. Such separation affords this same individual the ability to experience individuation. The individual desires to articulate both collective and personal selves. These self-interpretations, however, form through the employment of oppositional social states of solidarity and differentiation. It is within the tensional interplay between the collective self and personal self that the dynamical self forms. The individual's back and forth movement between the polar forms of self—collective and personal—points to

an unconscious desire to articulate a more fluid and non-polar form of self. The dynamical self, more importantly, forefronts an even greater desire to view oneself as multidimensional—a way of viewing oneself based upon fixed modes of self (collective/personal) and a fluid, non-polar interpretation of self (dynamical).

Secondly, this dissertation contends that these multiple forms of self—personal, collective, and dynamical selves—find expression in African American religion, particularly in African American Spiritual(ist) churches of New Orleans. The rich doctrinal beliefs and ritualistic activities of Spiritual(ist) churches serve as viable outlets in which adherents are able to define themselves in variety of ways. Adherents utilize symbols, ideas, objects, and images provided in the Spiritual(ist) doctrinal/ritual framework as “media” to create “selves.” In other words, religion provides medium that adherents incorporate into the carrying out of different modes of creativity (interpersonal creativity and intrapersonal creativity). Creativity not only yields a concrete product, but, as this dissertation has demonstrated, also becomes the mechanism employed by individuals to express multiple forms of self-interpretations. Multiple examples of this usage of religion as creative medium to articulate selves were presented in chapter four’s presentation of Bishop Jackson’s usage of Black Hawk, a recognized Native American spiritual guide in New Orleans Spiritual(ist) churches. The public honoring of Black Hawk in the form of a special ritual service functioned as a projective space in which Bishop Jackson expressed all three forms of self-interpretations outlined throughout this dissertation. As an interchangeable member of the encircling group, he displays views himself as part of the collective. However, his spontaneous movement towards the center represents a breakage from this same encircled group. Such differentiating action points

to Bishop Jackson's desire to assert personal agency and in this way view himself as a unique individual. The actions of Bishop Jackson in this Black Hawk ritual captures the antagonistic relationship between his actualization of dual desires to articulate notions of self premised upon collectivity and individuality. But, this ritualized projection of the tensional interplay of collective and personal selves, also offers a concrete manifestation of the dynamical self. Bishop Jackson's smoking of the circle cannot be reduced to the polar positions of "me" and "not-me." He smokes each participate while maintaining his position in the center of the group. Therefore, in situating himself in a position of and/both, Bishop Jackson expresses a view of himself that is truly dynamical.

Lastly, *Creating Selves*, asserts that in order for a multidimensional conception of self to be made possible a methodological shift must first occur. An examination of social analyses of African American religion presented in the works of W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, C. Eric Lincoln, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Sandra Barnes in chapter one uncovers a common strand running through social theories postulated by these social scientists. Particularly, the role religion plays in the lives of African Americans is reduced to one of integrative functionality. African American religion, then, is concerned with adaptation, solidarity, and cohesiveness. Such reduction, this dissertation has shown, leads to a dual fixation. First, self is fixed. The use of sociological methods in African American religious studies aids in the development of a particular approach to subject matter like that of the self. Specifically, the emphasis on collective function in sociological treatment of African American religion leads to a transposition of this same collectivist stance unto treatments of self offered primarily by pastoral care theologians. This transposition renders a collectivist notion of self—a fixed

notion this dissertation problematizes through the forwarding of a multidimensional conception of self. In addition to a fixated notion of self, the privileging of integrative function of African American religion marginalizes the role this same religion plays in the everyday experiences of the *individual*. The individual as a negotiator of sociological duality and the ways in which (s)he employs these negotiations to construct multiple notions of self that are personal, collective, and dynamical takes center stage in *Creating Selves*. A centering on the individual as an embodiment of complex social negotiations affords a releasing of both *self* and *functionality* from one-dimensional interpretative restraints of collectivity.

The three arguments outlined above bring into consideration corresponding implications of this dissertation for African American religious studies. First, an explicit treatment of self expands the range of subject matter taken up in African American religious discourse. As mentioned in the introduction, no text in this area of study currently exists that offers a comprehensive treatment of self. *Creating Selves*, secondly, adds to the geography of recognized methodologies and religious traditions in African American religious studies. While methods from history and sociology are considered, this dissertation also applies under-appreciated methodologies like psychology of religion and social psychology to advance a multidimensional model of self. Accordingly, Spiritual(ist) churches—an under-explored African American religious tradition—serve as viable outlets where the multiple selves of this model plays out. Finally, this dissertation increases the visibility of the individual in the study of African American religion in general and social examinations of African American religion in particular. This dissertation challenges the notion that such an examination leads to a privileging of

“rugged individualism.” Instead, *Creating Selves* presents the individual as complex, polar, fluid, and multidimensional characteristics expressed in the personal self, collective self, and dynamical self.

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