FROM THE WOMB OF BLACKNESS TO BLACK HOLINESS-PENTECOSTALISM

Leonard Lovett[1]

Abstract

This essay proffers that Black Holiness Pentecostalism shares the legacy of Black slave religion. This heritage consists in but is not limited to rituals, patterns of worship, preaching, testifying, shouting, and to the singing of members in the faith communities. How this heritage was bequeathed to Black Holiness-Pentecostalism or the route that these traditions traveled to arrive in Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is not always clearly delineated, but their presence is attested in five primary Black Holiness-Pentecostal groups. Since this article avowedly suggests that a historical continuity is present between African traditional religions and the Black Holiness-Pentecostal Movements in America, it should come as no surprise that a brief overview and delineation of major Black Holiness-Pentecostal groups in chronological sequence will be helpful in appreciating how it is that Black slave religion shapes Black Holiness-Pentecostalism on the American scene. Present within the corpus of Black Holiness-Pentecostalism, too, is a discernible epistemology, i.e., a way of knowing. Being Black, poor and Pentecostal, a condition of triple jeopardy, Black Pentecostals developed a worldview much closer to the reality of the world than that of the privileged. To see and construct social existence only from the vantage point of the privileged can, in fact, impose a severe limitation on one's ability to engage the Holy in a robust way. It is for these reasons the present essay contends that the legacy of Black slave religion informs Black Holiness-Pentecostalism.

The Primary Subgroups

United Holy Church of America

This religious movement dates from a revival meeting conducted at Method, North Carolina in 1886. Several personalities are associated with its

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[1] Leonard Lovett, Ph.D., is the Ecumenical Officer of Urban Affairs, *Emeritus* of the Church of God in Christ, Incorporated, Memphis, TN. He is the pioneer Dean Emeritus of C.H. Mason Seminary of the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA.

beginning. The following figures contributed to the founding of this group: L. M. Mason, G. A. Mials, Isaac Cheshier, H. C. Snipes, W. H. Fulford, and H. L. Fisher, who later became president of the movement. It originated as a representative holiness group and is among the first holiness bodies on record then to become Pentecostal. The first convocation was held at Durham, North Carolina in 1894, and the headquarters became established in that city. A division occurred in its early development over the belief in the necessity of the Lord's Supper for salvation but was resolved in 1907. Such a controversy was not uncommon among Black Protestant churches at the turn of the century as they sought to accommodate themselves to a rapidly changing social situation.

When the holiness message began to spread to other cities rapidly, some groups severed denominational ties while others retained theirs. Those who severed their ties were known as the "come-outers" and became members of the United Holiness Convention. Severe criticism of the "in-church people" by their denomination gradually drove the two groups together. In 1900 both groups merged and consented to use the name Holy Church of North Carolina. "Virginia" was later added as the movement spread northward, and in 1916 at Oxford, North Carolina, the name was changed to the United Holy Church of America.

Church of Christ Holiness, U.S.A

This movement emerged between 1894-96 under the leadership of Charles Price Jones (1865-1949), a Baptist preacher in Jackson, Mississippi. While pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama, Jones experienced dissatisfaction with his personal religious experience. After acceptance of the holiness message Jones attempted to remain a Baptist pastor and was later voted out of the Baptist Association. It was in 1900 that Jones formed the Christ's Association of Mississippi of Baptized Believers and developed an anti-denominational stance. This holiness body rejects tongues as the initial and only evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jones is regarded as one of the founders of the Church of God in Christ because of his affinity with and influence upon Charles H. Mason, Sr.

Church Of God In Christ, Incorporated

This movement was co-founded by Charles H. Mason, Sr. around 1897, and it originated at Lexington, Mississippi. Mason, a former Baptist pastor, was expelled from that denomination in response to his teachings on

sanctification. Mason had earlier received sanctification and was part of a body of radical "come-outers" who formed a group referred to only as "The Movement." In 1897, the revival had made its way to Lexington, which was sixty miles north of Jackson, Mississippi. The late Elder John Lee gave Mason permission to use his living room, which was too small due to the large crowds that turned out to hear the preaching of Mason. A Mr. Watson generously donated an abandoned gin house located on the bank of a little creek, consenting to the use of it for the revival. Opposition increased to the point that shots were fired into the services, but none were fatal. The emerging movement was present mainly in three states, i.e., Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas. The Church of God in Christ chose Charles Price Jones as General Overseer. Mason was appointed to preside over Tennessee, and J. A. Jeter was appointed to preside over Arkansas.

The transition in the Church of God in Christ occurred when Mason embraced the Pentecostal message and attested to the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as the sign of the presence of the Spirit. A general meeting of the then Church of God in Christ convened at Jackson, Mississippi, in 1907, and the body agreed to sever the fellowship with Mason and his followers due to Mason and others' acceptance of the Pentecostal message. Mason convened a similar meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, and this gathering constituted the first General Assembly of what we know today as the Church of God in Christ, Incorporated. This body unanimously chose Mason as Chief Apostle. The Headquarters remains in Memphis.

Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of God of The Americas

This group initially began as an "association" after separating from the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, a white church body, which had originated in Anderson, South Carolina, between 1890 and 1898, under the leadership of Benjamin Hardin Irwin. A fundamental tenet of Irwin and the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church was belief in *a third blessing* and a series of other baptisms in the Holy Ghost subsequent to conversion and sanctification. In 1908, blacks in the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church desired to form their organization so, they formally withdrew from the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and established the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of the Americas. William E. Fuller, a phenomenal administrator and evangelist from South Carolina, planted many congregations of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of the Americas and was its first Bishop. Today this denomination remains relatively small in comparison to its contemporaries.

Pentecostal Assemblies of the World

This Apostolic Pentecostal body emerged between 1906 and 1914 by way of Los Angeles, California and Hot Springs, Arkansas. There is some disagreement and controversy as to whether the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (hereafter cited as PAW) preceded the Assemblies of God (1914) by its emergence in Los Angeles as early as 1906. Garfield Thomas Haywood, an African-American and one of the first Presiding Bishops of the movement confirms the early founding of the "original" organization.[2] It originally began as an interracial body, and by 1924 whites had formed the Pentecostal Church Incorporated, a constituent body of the United Pentecostal Church, which was formed by a merger in 1945.

The "oneness" issue in 1914, which wrought havoc within the Assemblies of God movement influenced the early development of the PAW. The "oneness" issue is a theological point of view, which replaces the notion of the Trinity with a single, Jesus only view of the Holy. Frank J. Ewart and J.J. Frazee were advocates of this view. The founding of this denomination is a merger between the General Assembly of the Apostolic Churches and a group on the West Coast using the name PAW, naming E. W. Doak chairman and Garfield Thomas Hayward as secretary.[3] As late as 1921 Haywood denied any connection with the Assemblies of God, holding credentials with PAW from 1911, contending that it is impossible to "go back" to a place you have never been.[4] Haywood and his colleagues in their stand for their oneness doctrine were denounced as "hay, wood, and stubble" with the added remark referring to Haywood's publication, "they are all in wilderness and they have a voice in the wilderness."[5]

From the Womb of Blackness

Indeed, it can be candidly stated that Black Holiness-Pentecostalism shares the legacy of Black slave religion whose historical roots are anchored deep in African and Afro-Caribbean religion. The importance and significance of African survivals within Black religion in the New World

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[2]Morris E. Golder, *History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World* (Indianapolis, Indiana, n.p., 1973), 31.

[3]Fred J. Foster, *Think It Not Strange: A History of the Oneness Movement* (St. Louis, Missouri: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1965), 72ff.

[4]Golder, *History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World*, 38.

[5]Carl Brumback, *Suddenly From Heaven (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House*, 1961), 208.

have been the subject of much debate among anthropologists, sociologists, and historians.[6] The present study will draw on these sources for purposes of comparison where necessary, rather than attempt a thoroughgoing analysis of Black Holiness-Pentecostalism vis-à-vis African and Afro-Caribbean religion during the slave period.

However, it should be stated that it is primarily in worship, form, religious expression and lifestyle rather than a codified belief system that Black Holiness-Pentecostalism shares in the legacy of Black slave religion. It was from slave religion that a "Black style" of worship developed in an unstructured way as Black slaves encountered the Almighty God of their ancestors. Gayraud Wilmore reasons that since most of the first enslaved Africans brought to the American colonies came from the Antillean sub-region, it is possible that some of them had already made a partial transition from their native religions to Christianity prior to any systematic-evangelization on the mainland.[7]

The degree to which these Christianizing influences modified slave religion is a matter that requires a far more detailed treatment than is available to the present study. It was the slave's adaptation to Christianity without being wholly divested of his/her native religious "worship style" which is of importance as we view the historical roots of Black Holiness-Pentecostal religious lifestyle. We, furthermore, are reminded that even though slaves were uneducated regarding Western standards, their ancestral religions and the religious consciousness, which they engendered, were highly sophisticated and supportive of complex cultural systems. Wilmore further asserts:

> Well into the early nineteenth century, the slaves relied upon the most elemental presuppositions of a primitive religious consciousness to give consolation and meaning to their existence. Whatever the specific beliefs that had been salvaged from Africa, or from their

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[6]For discussion on the various positions present on Africanisms in the religious contexts of enslaved Africans in America, see: Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of The Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), 207ff; and E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Press, Orig. Copy. 1963), 1-19. The present article will return to this issue shortly.

[7]Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (New York: Doubleday & Company 1972), 7.

sojourn in the West Indies, they came under the most vigorous assault by the Protestant missionaries.[8]

It is known that Blacks as enslaved human beings were introduced to America in the Southern colonies where the Cavaliers and Huguenots, for the most part, were in control. They were said to be far more free and tolerant in their religious views than the Puritans in the Northeast. It was under the influence of these two groups that Black slaves in parts of the South reinterpreted and remade their religious practices. While the masters exposed slaves to their religion, only the fringe of their religious activity was shared. While the slaves were physically "in" enough to "feel" the spirit of their master's religion, their African cultural background, to a large extent kept them intellectual "out."[9] In fact, Black slaves were able to co-opt the outward observable acts of their masters and interpret them in terms of their original culture did they discover genuine spiritual meaning and religious vitality.

During the extended period of slavery, the religious freedom meted out to enslaved Africans provided the best avenue of articulation and meaningful expression when other ways were closed. It was under such conditions that slaves developed a strong, simple faith permeated with ample beliefs from their African past. Such conditions provided fertile soil for the birth and growth of a much later phenomenon known as Black Holiness sects. Carter G. Woodson stressed the similarity of African religion with the Hebraic background of Christianity and contended further that the African stories of creation and belief in the unity of God paralleled Christian theology. There was so much correspondence between the two traditions, Woodson argued, that about the only change that the Negro slave made was to label as Christian what the enslaved African practiced in Africa. Many of the slaves' worldview, Woodson contended, was survivals of the African belief in animism.[10]

No serious discussion of the survival of African religious influence is complete unless one acknowledges our indebtedness to E. Franklin Frazier, a prominent black sociologist who argued for a sharp break with the African past and Melville J. Herskovits, the famed anthropologist who made a case for continuity with the same. It was by no means accidental that Herskovits

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[8]Ibid., 16.

[9]William A. Clark, "Sanctification in Negro Religion," *Social Forces* 15, no. 4 (May, 1937): 544-551.

[10]Carter G. Woodson, *The African Background Outlined* (Washington, D.C.; Association for the Study of the Negro, 1936).

spent a significant portion of time studying large segments of peoples undergoing a cultural change in contrast to an exclusive focus on the study of stable societies. In Herskovits' analysis, the concept of cultural reinterpretation informs the rest of his arguments. Implicit within the concept of cultural reinterpretation is a recognition of the fact that every phenomenon in human behavior has two aspects: its form and its meaning. In societies where contact with other peoples are at a minimum and where a maximum of cultural integration has occurred, it is difficult to distinguish between form and meaning.[11]

Herskovits believed that as people moved from one culture to an alien one, there was a tendency to adopt new forms more readily than new meanings. He asserted:

> There is little question that under acculturation, form changes more readily than meaning. This brings us back to the concept of cultural reinterpretation, as we study the phenomenon, we see more and more clearly that peoples adopt new forms more readily than new meanings; that characteristically they assign old meanings to the new forms, thereby maintaining their preexisting systems of values, and making the break with established custom minimal as far as their cognitive responses are concerned. On the emotional level, they retain the satisfaction derived from earlier ways, while adopting new forms that seem advantageous to them.[12]

In direct opposition to this viewpoint, E. Franklin Frazier insisted that due to the emasculating process of slavery, Negroes brought to America were stripped entirely of all the vestiges of the African heritage. This notion held true for Frazier in his study of two fundamental institutions of the Black community—the Black family and the Black church. Speaking of enslaved Africans, Frazier observed, "of the habits and customs as well as the hopes and fears that characterized the life of their forbears in Africa, nothing remains.[13] Once the Black family was destroyed as the result of forced servitude, Frazier further contended, it was the Christian religion rather than

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[11]Melville J. Herskovits, *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 180.

[12]Ibid., 180.

[13]E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. Originally published in 1939), Part I.

any vestiges of African culture or religious experience that provided a new basis of social cohesion for Black slaves transported to North America.[14]

It can be candidly stated that while the debate on African retentions in Slave culture was not fully resolved during the lifespan of Herskovits and Frazier, both served to enrich the other and to foster continuing discussion relative to the issue of African survival in the New World, especially in the American south In reviewing the spiritual experiences of slaves, one can readily identify certain vestiges and links which emanated from Africa and shape part of a tradition. Genovese pointed to such a link when he asserted:

> In the southern U. S. the combination of hostile white power, small plantation and farm units, and the early closing of the slave trade crushed much of the specific African religious memory . . . But since the denominations could not easily absorb the African impulse, they found themselves defeated by it in two sometimes complementary and sometimes antagonistic ways: Large residues of "superstition" remained in the interstices of the black community; and Afro-Christianity arose as something within the Euro-Christian community and yet remained very much without.[15]

Since religion permeates the whole of life amongst subgroups in sub-Saharan West Africa, it is in that field of culture, denominated as supernatural that one will discover that peoples of African descent manifest the purest and most extensive range of Africanisms. The various recorded instances indicative of this phenomenon document the determination of the enslaved Africans to rescue as much as possible their aboriginal beliefs from the debacle of slavery. Herskovits asserts:

> Where Catholicism was the religion of the masters, the problem of retention of African religious practices was simpler than in Protestant countries. For example, in countries like Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, West African and Congo cults flourish in such purity that, as we shall presently see, they lay bare significant facets of African religion that have heretofore been shown most difficult, if not impossible to study in Africa itself. The analysis of the Shouters sect in Trinidad

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[14]Ibid., 14.

[15]Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, N.Y. Vintage Books, 1972), 211.

> documents the manner in which the aboriginal patterns were transmuted into Protestantism.[16]

Roger Bastide contributes to the discussion by viewing religion within Black communities as the main factor for solidarity.[17] Conversion of the American Negro to Christianity was originally reserved for house slaves, but gradually spread until soon after the Declaration of Independence—a period that coincided with the epoch of religious revivalism—it had reached the bulk of the Black population. Bastide then asserts:

> That is why the religion of the Negro community is a revivalist creed, affective rather than moral or rational. Worshippers want external evidence of being "saved"—visions, dream, trances, and emotion is cultivated at the expense of reason.[18]

In brief, Bastide argues that affective religion operates in functional liaison with the social and economic program of the Black community and is not to be explained in terms of any "African heritage." In effect, affective religion is a response and not a museum piece. If the lower class American Negro's religion tends to be affective, it is not in consequence of some African survival, but is what it is because the slave restricted, dominated, exploited, rejected, or channeled his/her need for security and compensation into Christianity, which the enslaved African adopted as a means of coping with harsh oppression. Bastide further contends that in the United States of America, the Negro has preserved no trace of African ancestral religion; in the slaves' quest for violent emotionalism, for some affective faith, the enslaved African has borrowed wholesale from North American revivalism—itself a continuation of Scottish revivalism. Bastide finds support in Guy Johnson who made a thorough study of the Gullah Negroes, reputed to be one of the most traditional communities in the United States located on the coastal sea islands of South Carolina. Johnson found nothing in those Negro churches which did not also feature in those of the whites: hand-clapping, rhythmic swaying of the body in time with the music, the practice of "bearing witness" or making "public confession" were all common practices in both races.[19]

In contrasting white revivalism with Black religion, Bastide, using Hortense's analysis to make the argument, reveals that in white revivalism

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[16]Melville J. Herskovits, *New World Negro* (Indiana: Minerva Press, 1966), 15.
[17]Roger Bastide, *African Civilization in the New World* (C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd. 1972), 203.
[18]Ibid., 203.
[19]Ibid., 163.

one always finds large numbers of nonparticipating onlookers who remain outside the infectious mood of excitement: whereas among Blacks, everyone without exception is a performer. The predominant feeling, which emerges from the "testifying" of whites is fear of eternal damnation; whereas the most common sentiment among Blacks is hope—hope for salvation, deliverance from the bondage of a symbolic Egypt. Among Europeans, ecstatic possession, when it occurs, tends to assume the form of hysterical cries, and bodily movements are far more violent or convulsive. Among Blacks, such movements tend to be rhythmic and organized.[20]

Bastide advances his most potent argument in discussing the consequences of the slave's reaction to certain biblical texts, which reminded them of their own condition, such as the story of Egyptian bondage and the subsequent liberation by Moses, or the Babylonian captivity. Popular also were texts dealing with the apostles that demonstrated the existence of certain relevant phenomena in the primitive church—e.g., prophetic utterance, or the ability to speak with tongues through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Bastide concludes:

> Such were the original guiding forces behind African-Protestant syncretism, which led to a quite different orientation, in the general direction of angelism, messianism, and the reinterpretation of African ecstatic possession in terms of revivalists' sects or the descent of the Holy Ghost.[21]

Bastide's argument is reductionist, to say the least, in his assertion that Black religion is affective rather than moral or rational, for when a human being is encountered by the Spirit, the emotion, intellect and the volition are affected in various ways. What is at stake for this analysis is that Black slaves in the New World exercised a great deal of rationality in adapting to a new social order, that religion within the African context of joint traditional beliefs played a major role in the survival process, and that the similarities within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism are not merely coincidental, but have important historical roots and precedents. African survivals in the New World and especially in religion were sustained to a large degree by two acculturative processes occurring simultaneously. There was the interaction of Africans from differing cultures within Africa resulting in a variety of customs and practices that were distinctly African. There was

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[20]Roger Bastide, *African Civilization in the New World*, 163.
[21]Ibid., 203.

the interaction of African and Western cultures, which resulted in the transformation of the cultural patterns of both groups, for where European practices were weak and relatively subordinate, African survivals were correspondingly strengthened. The slave came out of cultures that were sufficiently stable to ensure the persistence of those practices whose value and superiority alone were crucial in maintaining their existence.[22]

The survival of certain Africanisms in Black religion and especially within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is further testimony that Africa slaves emerged from an experience which was sufficiently entrenched to make possible the persistence of African customs and traditions. It has been cogently argued that where European practices were relatively weak, the opportunities for African survivals were correspondingly strengthened.[23] The South was a natural habitat for the birth as well as the development of Black Holiness-Pentecostalism. Despite the federal legislation of 1807, slaves were continually brought to the New World, so that by 1836, several thousand were reported taken into Texas annually. Bay Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, was a depot where at times as many as 16,000 Africans were on hand to be shipped to Florida, Texas, Louisiana and other markets in the South. As late as 1859, Blacks were openly advertised for sale, and most Southern cities had depots where one could purchase newly-arrived Africans if Blacks from the upper South were not desired. Such cities as Vicksburg and Memphis received large contingents of imported slaves during this period.[24]

Indigenous Parallels

There is some evidence to suggest that certain "Africanisms" and African parallels such as the sacred dance, spirit possession (Baptism in the Holy Spirit within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism), call and response and *glossolalia*—all of which are freely appropriated within Black Holiness Pentecostalism and reflect African influences—are by no means coincidental.[25]

Most persons who are intensely familiar with Black Holiness-Pentecostalism would, for the most part, agree that the genius of the movement lies within the freedom of the corporate body as much as its

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[22]John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 40-41.
[23]Ibid., 40-41.
[24]Ibid., 183.
[25]Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, 231.

intense spirituality. It appears that many of the vestiges of the African past, which supposedly disappeared under the pressures of slavery, periodically broke through disguised in the freedom of worship and lifestyle as espoused within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism.

The cross-section of a particular first-generation slave plantation would conceivably in some instances reveal the continuation of tribal patterns with witch doctors, priests, chieftains, warriors, hunters, craftsmen who worked in clay, copper, ivory, stone, bronze, and gold; women weavers, griots, and drummers. While on another plantation, no tribal continuity was preserved, to say nothing of a common language. In the latter setting, it is conceivable that the universal emotions of rebellion, self-expression, and anger were most suppressed. When these emotions manifest themselves within the context of the Christian church under the leadership of a preacher chosen from among these slaves, it is highly conceivable that the worship style and form of emotional expression would parallel those forms which were distinctively African.

For example, dancing in the African worldview expresses various forms and aspects of life such as victory in warfare, protection and forgiveness of the gods, good harvesting, death, birth, puberty rites, marriage, success in love, revenge, and the honoring of ancestors. Those dances, considered sacred, contained powerful teleological implications.

> The largest African dance heritage is in those dances considered sacred; the end result, the supreme experience was possession; possession was the ultimate religious experience; to be possessed by a God who spoke through one was the aim of the drumming and dancing.[26]

In a Black Holiness-Pentecostal worldview, dancing contains similar implications. Charles H. Mason, Sr. apologetically wrote after documenting dancing four times in the New Testament and several times in the Old Testament:

> Dancing shows that we have victory--1 Samuel 18:6; Dancing of the people of God is to be in the Spirit of Jesus only, for as in Jesus only we rejoice and praise God, we must have Jesus and all Jesus, Jesus in all things in the church and His saints. The people of God do not

[26]Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance in the United States, 1619-1970* (New York: National Press Books, 1972), 48.

> dance as the world dances, but are moved by the Spirit of God. So you can see it is all in the Spirit of God and to the glory of God. It is not to satisfy the lust of the flesh, or the carnal appetite, as the world's dance, but only to glorify God and satisfy the soul. The world dances of the world, about the world and to the world. The children of God dance of God, for God and to the praise and glory of His name. They have the joy of the Spirit of the Lord in them. They are joyful in their King, the Christ.[27]

For Mason, religious reality is divided into the sacred and the secular as is reflected in his reference to "dancing as unto the Lord" in contradistinction to "dancing of the world, about the world and to the world." In the African worldview dancing embraces the whole of life, but under the influence of Protestant missionaries, especially in Afro-Caribbean settings, dancing took on evil connotations. Very early in the history of the Shout, certain rules were developed--one of the most interesting being that the feet or legs must not cross. Emery says,

> Dance was frowned upon by many Protestant churches in the South, yet the need to worship in this way had not been eradicated from the plantation slave. The Afro-American was forced to improvise and substitute to fulfill needs acceptably. The Black religious dance in this country was improvised to fit within the structure of the Protestant church. While not actually dances, the Shout and Ring Shout were certainly substitutes for the dancing common to African and West Indian religious ceremonies.[28]

An essential improvisation within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is that the purpose of the sacred dance is not possession by the Spirit, but rather one rejoices because the human spirit has become rejuvenated and energized by the Holy Spirit and the response may or may not be the sacred dance. In some West African circles,[29] religious dancing takes place until the deity possesses the devotee, and this often takes place in response to the beating of drums. In Black Holiness-Pentecostalism, sacred dancing and music, which

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[27] German Ross, ed., *History and Formative Years of The Church Of God In Christ* (Memphis: Tennessee, C.O.G.I.C. Publishing House, 1969). Charles H. Mason, Sr. "Is It Right for the Saints of God to Dance?" in German Ross, *History and Formative Years of the Church Of God In Christ* (Memphis, Tennessee: C.O.G.I.C. Publishing House, 1969), 36.

[28] Emery, *Black Dance in the United States*, p. 120; see also Mason Crum, Gullah: *Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1940), 140.

[29] R. A. Schermerhorn, *These Our People: Minorities in American Cultures* (Boston: D. C. Health, 1949), 90.

may include drumming, is usually, but not always an integral part of praise and adoration to God.

Speaking in tongues is a significant corollary to dancing within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism. David M. Beckmann utilizing the insights garnered from the research of several anthropologists and historians argued the thesis that trance, of which speaking in tongues is a stylized form, is a gift which Afro-Americans brought with them into Christianity. He defines trance as an altered state of consciousness accompanied by agitation or activity. In trance, as in other altered states of consciousness, such as dreams and daydreams, visions and mystical experiences, the person's normal orientation to reality temporarily fades. Trance should be distinguished from these quiet states of mind, however.[30] Entranced activity might be speaking or singing, twitching or rolling, dancing or convulsing, but by definition there must be activity.[31] After studying the trance experience and collecting data on some 488 representative societies all over the world, Bourguignon distinguished possession from trance. She further categorizes the trance experienced in some nineteenth-century revivalist religion and twentieth century Pentecostalism as a form of "possession." That among traditional societies in the world trance is most frequently interpreted as spirit possession in Africa and areas influenced by Africa, and further held that the possession-trance cult, paralleled within Christianity by some nineteenth-century revivalism and twentieth century Pentecostalism, is a predominantly African cultural configuration.[32]

> Possession-trance in Africa often includes the same two types of *glossolalia* found in Pentecostalism. One is rhythmic, alliterative pseudo-language. The other is actual foreign language; in most cases the person possessed has had previous contact with the language, even though he (*sic*) may be unable to speak it in his (*sic*) normal state of mind.[33]

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[30]David M. Beckmann, "Trance: From Africa to Pentecostalism," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, no. XLV (January 1974): 1.

[31]Felicitas Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross Cultural Study of Speaking in Tongues* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 58-60.

[32]Erika Bourguignon, "World Distribution and Patterns of Possession States," *Trance and Possession State*, ed. by Raymond Prince (Montreal: R. M. Bucke Memorial Society. 1968), 5-25.

[33]Beckmann, "Trance: From Africa to Pentecostalism,"13.

Speaking in tongues as a trance experience appears to be somewhat of a strained anthropological argument which would only have merit within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism in the sense that it is inclusive of "entranced activity." Beckmann is attempting to demonstrate that speaking in tongues, the most dramatic innovation of Pentecostalism has more important Afro-American and African antecedents. Within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues is viewed as evidence, though not the only evidence, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign whereby verification is given to the incoming of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer. It is more than a repetitive string of syllables; it is a way the human spirit attempts to express the inexpressible elation of its encounter with the Holy Spirit. In the words of Brunner, tongues-speaking, by being at the same time a highly spiritual and a highly physical experience, transforms the coming of the Holy Spirit into a knowable, clear and datable experience, manifest in time and space.[34]

Speaking in tongues within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is symbolic of surrender to God and is an indication that the Holy Spirit possesses the believer. The Holy Spirit merely seizes that member/organ of the body that no one can tame, namely, the tongue, using it to express praises to God. The Pentecostal antimonite with power is evidence of a new beginning, a new pilgrimage toward meaningful existence. Spirit-possession within the African worldview is transposed to (into) the baptism in the Holy Spirit with Black Holiness-Pentecostalism. The baptism of the "Holy Ghost" as commonly referred to is the cardinal belief among Black Holiness-Pentecostals.

Spirit Possession/Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism the belief about the baptism in the Holy Spirit is thought of regarding the second or third crisis experience. While the Pauline view (regeneration, fruit of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit) is embraced, it is the Lukan view (power for service) as recorded especially in Acts that is given primary emphasis. All other doctrines and beliefs are considered secondary to a full reception of the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is held to be an encounter with God (subsequent to conversion) in which the Christian believer begins to receive the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit into his life. In regeneration, the believer experiences the Holy Spirit in the introductory ministry of the Spirit, but in

[34]Frederick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans 1970), 4.

the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the believer experiences the empowering ministry of the Spirit. It is the spiritual baptism where Jesus the baptizer exercises His sovereign will, control and possession of us through the person of the Holy Spirit.

The United Holy Church of America affirms its belief in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, viewing it as the gift of power on the sanctified life.[35] (Luke 24:49, John 7:38-39, Acts 1:5-8). This movement is open to various kinds of evidence of the incoming of the Holy Spirit including speaking in tongues. Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas believes that "the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire is obtainable by a definite act of appropriating faith on the part of the wholly sanctified believer, and that the initial evidence of the reception of this experience is speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" (Acts 1:5, 8:7, 8:14-17, 10:4-46 and 19:6).[36] This Movement emphasizes Fire as much as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit using the scriptural sanction of Hebrews 12:29 *"For our God is a consuming fire."* They radically contend and state that:

> Fire is uncompromising. Fire Baptized saints will not compromise with the wrong in themselves. Fire will do four things: first, light up; second, warm up; third, purge; and fourth, purify. Fire Baptized folks are lit up, warmed up, purged and purified. When we use "Fire" in our name we use it as a symbol of the uncompromising God.[37]

The baptism in the Holy Spirit with Fire is never assumed: it must be sought as a definite experience by the believer on the basis of one's faith. Experientially the Spirit baptism in this context is a radical encounter of the divine with the human spirit, infusing it with *dunamis*, transforming discipleship into horizontal responsibility. The Church of Christ Holiness U.S.A. concedes that every true believer is heir to the Holy Spirit and views the experience as subsequent to conversion, but in a terminological distinction does not view it as a "baptism" of the Holy Spirit. They contend that since the Holy Spirit's baptism of the whole church on the day of Pentecost, The Holy Spirit is referred to thereafter as a "gift" (Acts 2:38,39),

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[35]Manual, The United Holy Church of America. N.P: 1980, 9.

[36]Fuller, W.E., *Discipline of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas*, (USA: Board of Publications - *F.B.H. Church of God of the Americas*, 1978), 19.

[37]*Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas, Discipline of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas* (Board of Publications of the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas: Atlanta: N.P., 198?), Preface.

a "receiving" (Acts 19:1,2), a "filling" (Ephesians 5:18), and "anointing" (1 John 2:27). The Holy Spirit is never again referred to as a "baptism," for there is but one baptism (Ephesians 4:1-5).[38] Tongues are not viewed as the only evidence, but merely as one Sign.[39]

Garfield T. Haywood of the PAW stated that the "gift" of the Holy Spirit referred to the life, which was sacrificed and given unto us, and that it is the life of Christ Himself.[40] Haywood further held that to be born of the Spirit is to be baptized with the Holy Spirit,[41] a view that is anti-Pentecostal. Golder appears to have been somewhat of a revisionist when he later wrote, "The Holy Spirit does not indwell the believer simply because he (sic) says, 'I believe'", as many evangelicals teach. St. Paul argues that the Holy Spirit comes after believing (Eph 1:13) and this is not synonymous with the baptism with the Holy Spirit.[42]

Whatever way the baptism in the Holy Spirit is manifested or expressed among Black Holiness-Pentecostals, there appears to be a consensus that the experience is normative for all Christians, and that it endues them with power for more effective witnessing. It is a mountaintop experience received in the form of a special commitment. They agree with Kilian McDonnell that this power-generating, bridge-burning experience is the ultimate sign of the supreme relevancy of the Gospel. It is the sign that God is truly present in the consciousness of human beings and active in their personal history.[43]

The view that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is normative for all Christians is consistent with the Church of God in Christ's view that we are not baptized with the Spirit to be saved and become the children of God, but that we are baptized with the Spirit because we are saved and are the children of God.[44] In this context, the Holy Spirit immanently indwells the soul of the believer empowering the consciousness of the believer for witness.

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[38]Church of Christ, Holiness, *Manual of the History, Doctrine, Government and Ritual of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A.* (Jackson: National Headquarters Church of Christ, Holiness, 1945), 24.

[39]Ibid., 26.

[40]Paul D. Dugas, ed., The Life and Writings of Elder G.T Haywood (Portland, OR: Apostolic Book Publishers, 1968), 18.

[41]Ibid., 14.

[42]Morris Golder, *The Principles of Our Doctrine*, (n.p.; n.p.196?), 14.

[43]Kilian McDonnell, "The Ideology of Pentecostal Conversion" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 5, (Winter, 1968): 110.

[44]Range, C.F., *Church of God in Christ: Official Manual (Memphis*: COGIC Publishing Board, 1973), 56.

Postscript

The infusion of African elements into Afro-American religion, especially in the South and particularly within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism hints at features, which suggest a process of indigenization. The element of call and response, a commonly identified "Africanism" can readily be discerned in the common ritual of Black folk-style worship among Black Holiness-Pentecostals. This notion can be identified in the preaching, testifying, shouting, and singing of adherents. The values attached to each component of Black folk-style worship are personal, unique and highly cherished within the tradition and can be identified in the preaching, testifying, shouting, and singing, of adherents. The values attached to each component of Black folk-style worship are personal, unique and highly cherished within the tradition. Intonation, moaning, tuning, and whooping are part of the preaching component in the Black worship experience, and these characteristics stem from the African custom of singing almost everything.[45] Moreover, the details of Afro-Christian mixture in the Black churches are hard to determine with confidence. African survivals would explain such historically puzzling features as the emphasis on spirit-possession, the "moaning" style of preaching, and the distinctive musical style in the worship services." Within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism preaching is always dialogical in spirit, mood and style. The preacher utilizes rhetorical quips frequently such as "can I find a witness" so as to encourage communal response.[46] The testimony service among Black Holiness-Pentecostals is a ritual in which believers express their private experiences with the Holy Spirit. Testimonies are spoken in a style of delivery of rhythmic cadence of free prose. Some are chanted or intoned in a quasi-solo song with repetition of words and phrases, which may be responded to by the congregation in our now familiar call and response. Within Black Holiness-Pentecostalism, the testimony serves a two-fold function. It is a mode of expression and a method of emotional release. Testimonies usually refer to praise for the gift of salvation, frequent miracles and experiences with God, which occur in the eschatological now where the past and present are fused into a meaningful event of celebration.

Black Holiness-Pentecostalism, too, rejects the abstract god of the Western philosophers and theologians and opted for the African concept of

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[45]Henry H. Mitchell, Black Preaching (N.Y: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1970), 164.

[46]Lester B. Scherer, *Slavery and the Churches in Early America 1619-1819* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 148.

god, the notion of a more concrete God who could be encountered at a profoundly personal level. Black Holiness-Pentecostalism opted for a God who was, in fact, the structure or context in which reality emerges and the totality of that reality. God is eternal and temporal, transcendent, and immanent. Black Holiness-Pentecostals' view of God is dynamic, for within Black Holiness Pentecostalism, the human spirit, is encountered by the Holy Spirit of God. Black Holiness-Pentecostalism welcomed the coming of the Holy Spirit not as an invader of the human spirit but rather as one who comes to *"keep you saved"* to console you through midnights of oppression and trials and be with you even to the end of the world. Discernible on the Black Holiness-Pentecostalism religious continuum is a dynamic worship style. Once its theology of power is developed, this could have profound significance for theology today. A theological-pneumatological discourse which takes seriously that the oral tradition, e.g., testimony, dance, song, spontaneity, has merit for Black Holiness-Pentecostalism and the broader culture.

The history of Black Holiness-Pentecostalism is exciting and full of triumphs as well as tragedies, full of promise and riddled with failures. The Black Holiness-Pentecostal leaders were the offspring of devoutly religious slaves whose African roots were deep within the Black religious tradition where freedom of worship and varied lifestyles were dominant motifs. The narrative of Black Holiness-Pentecostals is a story of a people, who felt the potency of the Liberator, Jesus Christ, and took His call to freedom and to experience Him seriously. Through the Black Holiness-Pentecostals, the "first love" broke through the boundaries of creeds, denominations, race and class to demonstrate that *"God has once again chosen the base things of this world to bring through the mighty, the foolishness of the world to confound the wise"* (1 Cor 1:27-29).

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