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Graduate Division of Religion

Ethics & Society

“Get the Learnin’ but don’t lose the Burnin’”: The Socio-Cultural and Religious Politics of
Education in a Black Pentecostal College

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Abstract

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In 1917 the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the oldest and largest black Pentecostal denomination in the United States, established Saints Literary and Industrial School (later renamed Saints Junior College) in rural Lexington, Mississippi. The school served as the denomination’s main educational initiative for over fifty years and was responsible for educating some of COGIC’s most well known leaders. Despite its regional reputation for academic excellence, the college closed in 1983.

Studies documenting the black church’s support of educational institutions have ignored COGIC’s engagement with education, choosing to focus instead on Black Baptist and Methodist denominations and their contributions. Seeking to disrupt common perceptions that black Pentecostals are anti-intellectual, this study argues that Saints provides an important glimpse into black Pentecostal intellectual culture. The study argues that early leaders and laypersons in the Church of God in Christ created a learning environment where academic, spiritual and moral development was paramount. Furthermore it suggests that the demise of Saints should not be attributed to an adoption of an anti-intellectual ethic but rather to a host of forces internal and external to the denomination.

Research methods include interviews with former students, teachers and administrators from Saints, interviews with COGIC leaders, analyses of denominational and other historical documents, and observation of COGIC National Conferences. The findings suggest the need for more complicated analyses of black Pentecostal groups’ educational values. Additionally it strongly encourages scholars of religion and American education to challenge allegations of black Pentecostal anti-intellectualism.

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to ignore the enormous Pentecostal currents in American religion. Introduced over a century ago into the American religious context, Pentecostalism has steadily gained momentum. Harvey Cox, Walter Hollenweger, and James Tinney are among the chorus of scholars that heralded the rise of Pentecostalism and chronicled its transformation from obscurity to international recognition.¹ They have argued persuasively that Pentecostal communities of increasing variety constitute a strong and distinctive voice within the Protestant Christian family. Promoting Spirit-driven theologies and energetic worship practices, the growth of Pentecostalism has sparked new conversations about the future of religion in America and around the world. Known for its exuberant worship practices, this “Third Force” in Christianity has prompted waves of scholarship in the last three decades. Sociologists of religion in particular have been interested in Pentecostalism’s sect-like qualities (Johnson 1961; Schwartz 1970), its movement from sect to church (Shopshire 1975), the social composition of Pentecostal churches (Anderson 1978), Pentecostals’ political and social activism (McRoberts 2003), and reasons for the

¹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*(Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1999); Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*(London: SCM Press, 1972). James Tinney, “Pentecostalism in Three Worlds”, Unpublished.

movement's rapid growth (Gerlach and Hine 1970).²

Yet few have taken Pentecostal scholastic activities seriously. There have been few studies of Pentecostal education, intellectual life, and progressive social activities in general. Historian Karen Kossie-Chernyshev speculates that attention to Pentecostals' "exotic" worship has hindered serious inquiry into their actions outside of church:

Either enthralled or appalled by the exoticism of Pentecostal worship, onlookers tended to focus on calisthenics, women and men dancing down the aisles of the church, children playing tambourines and clapping their hands in polyrhythmic abandon, and people possessed by the spirit either collapsing under the power or taking victory laps around a wood framed church. In all the clamor, the unique story of black Pentecostals' progressive ideals was muted.³

Because of their theology's emphasis on the Spirit as the source of all knowledge and the lack of formal education requirements for ordination of clergy, Pentecostals left the impression on some inside and outside of the tradition that

²Benton Johnson, "Do Holiness Sects Socialize in Dominant Values?," *Social Forces* 39, no. 4 (May, 1961). Gary Schwartz, *Sect Ideologies and Social Status*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). James Shopshire, "A Socio-Historical Characterization of the Black Pentecostal Movement in America" (Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975). Omar M. McRoberts, *Streets of Glory : Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*, Morality and Society Series(Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003). Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine, *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation* (Indianapolis The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1970).

³ Karen Kossie-Cherneshev, "Constructing Good Success: The Church of God in Christ and Social Uplift in East Texas, 1910-1935," *East Texas Historical Association* XLIV, no. 1 (2006). 49.

the pursuit of education, both general and theological in nature, was unimportant. Without careful interrogation, scholars and uninformed lay observers either accepted these characterizations of Pentecostals' beliefs about education or simply failed to pay close attention to the variety and complexity of their views on this matter.⁴ In reality, Pentecostal groups have offered a wide variety of responses to what they perceived as the growing secularization of education in public secondary schools and the "liberal takeover" of America's colleges, seminaries, and universities. Because of their limited access to resources some groups invested little in education. Others supported education in spite of their lack of resources. Pentecostal denominations have nurtured the educational aspirations of their members by encouraging their matriculation through already established schools and colleges, building schools of their own or simply providing spiritual support for those who made their way through secular contexts.

Description of the Research

During the summer of 2006 I flew to Houston, Texas to attend the annual Auxiliaries In Ministry (AIM) conference of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). Invited by Elder Raynard Smith, a doctoral student in psychology of religion at Drew University, I eagerly anticipated attending two days of meetings with

⁴Anti-educational charges have not been hurled against Pentecostals from outsiders alone: Pentecostals have cast these charges against each other. See Rick Nanez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds? A Call to Use God's Gift of Intellect*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

COGIC Scholars, a group that was dedicated to the academic pursuits of COGIC members and more broadly to fostering the intellectual life of the church.

At the conference I confronted my own stereotypes about Pentecostals and their educational pursuits. I was surprised that the meetings were arranged like typical sessions at an American Academy of Religion meeting. Panelists gave intellectually invigorating papers that were sometimes followed with responses from experts in their particular area. The meetings were not well attended but the people in the room impressed me. I had not expected for the panel participants to present “real” scholarship or for the attendees to represent such a variety of educational backgrounds. Represented were people who had completed bible colleges (accredited and non-accredited), historically black colleges and universities, large state schools, or a combination of all of the above. They had earned degrees of all kinds and a select few had earned Ph.D.s. It didn’t take long for my own biases about Pentecostals to be shattered.

At the conclusion of the final session a woman approached me to tell me that she was impressed with the questions I had asked of the panelists. She queried me about my academic pursuits, gave me a hug, and a hundred dollar bill to help me defray the cost of my conference travel. Her generous and unexpected gesture signaled to me that the story of Pentecostals and their relationship to education was more nuanced than I had expected.

After the sessions I arranged an interview with Dr. Goldie Wells, the Director of the C.H. Mason System of Bible Colleges. During our interview she told me about the establishment of COGIC’s first national school and its tragic

decline. I was immediately captivated by the tale in part because its female protagonist, Dr. Arenia Mallory, was interesting, but also because I had not heard anything like it before. As an Apostolic Pentecostal who grew up in a different historically black denomination, COGIC narratives were foreign to me. Over the course of two days I would hear the story Dr. Wells relayed to me repeated to me by several different people. It seemed to me then and has become even clearer now, that the stories of Pentecostal schools are terribly important ones. They interrupt common perceptions of Pentecostals as unconcerned with education and disrupts meta-narratives of Pentecostal education by highlighting the diversity of schools they established.

COGIC's educational system is comprised of three main units. The C.H. Mason Seminary, founded in 1970, provides theological training for future clergy and church workers. Since its inception the seminary has been part of a consortium of historically black seminaries called, the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia. The second major educational unit, the C.H. Mason System of Bible Colleges, was established in 1973 and has a similar goal. It awards certificates to ministers and church workers who may be unable (or perhaps unwilling) to attend the seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. All Saints Bible College is COGICs latest venture. Located in Memphis, Tennessee, the four-year school was established in 2002 as a secular college alternative for COGIC youth.

The focus of this project is one component of COGICs educational system that is now defunct. COGICs first and longest running educational initiative,

Saints Industrial and Literary School (hereafter called “Saints”), was established adjacent to COGIC’s mother church in Lexington, Mississippi. At the height of its popularity in 1954, Saints became a junior college and would boast the matriculation of some of COGIC’s most influential leaders. In 1976, COGIC closed the junior college division, while continuing to operate Saints Academy until 1983, when the campus closed for ten years. An attempt to resurrect the school in the 1990s was successful but short-lived; Saints closed unceremoniously a short time later. Today the memory of Saints lingers in the hearts and minds of former graduates, administrators, the COGIC faithful, and Lexington community members who were alive during the school’s tenure. The historic Saints campus is still intact but is not utilized by the denomination or the Lexington community. Locked behind its gates is a history that is, sadly, slowly fading.

Within Pentecostal circles, Saints stood out, if for no reason other than that it lasted longer than most other schools founded by black Pentecostals and because it maintained an accredited junior college. The school also enjoyed the attention of the black Pentecostal world because it was supported by COGIC, the most visible black Pentecostal denomination. While the focus of this project is Saints, more broadly, the project offers some insights about the denomination that sustained it.

COGIC in Context

Founded in 1897, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is the oldest and largest black Pentecostal denomination. In the 2007 survey of American

religious bodies in the *Yearbook of Canadian and American Churches*, COGIC was ranked the fifth-largest religious body in the United States, out-numbered only by the Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁵ With over 5.5 million members, COGIC is larger than its older black Protestant peers, the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Profiled in Lincoln and Mamiya's survey of black denominational families in 1990, nearly a century after its inception, COGIC has become the best representative of black mainstream Pentecostalism in America.

In November 2007, I attended the National Convocation of COGIC in Memphis, Tennessee. Every year the weeklong event attracts COGIC faithful from all over the nation. Congregations from as far away as the United Kingdom and the Caribbean send representatives to take part in the fellowship. Those who make the pilgrimage to Memphis are lured by the opportunity to commune with like-minded "saints" and to partake in the week's plethora of activities designed to renew one's commitment to the faith and the tradition. Worship services, midnight gospel concerts, and early-morning prayer breakfasts provide spiritual nourishment for the thousands who attend.

The scene in the lobby of the host hotel immediately struck me. Regally dressed women lined the hallways of the Marriott hotel, flaunting fancy fur coats

⁵Evaluation Office of Research, and Planning of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 11.

and colorful high-heeled shoes. The men also came in their finest. Adorned in custom-made shirts and hard-to-find expensive shoes and suits, they commanded a second look. One of my COGIC-born friends explained that many of the persons I was gawking at were influential bishops, first ladies, and leaders in the denomination. Many more of them were just regular folks dressing the part.

One thing was clear to me after just one day in Memphis: COGIC had come a long way from Lexington, Mississippi, where its first church was established. After 100 years of existence it had the resources to book the FedEx Forum, home of the Memphis Grizzlies, for its convention. Additionally, every year conference attendees managed to book all of the hotel rooms in Memphis. This was a church with institutional means, evidenced by the numbers of corporations clamoring for the church's business. During one of the sessions of the General Assembly, the newly elected presiding bishop, Charles Blake, invited some executives from a prominent health care company to the podium. The executives encouraged the pastors in the audience to have their members explore health coverage with their company. Outside of the main auditorium, vendors enticed convention-goers to spend money on hats, scarves, Bibles, and books at their booths. A local car dealership lent a car for display and sponsored a giveaway contest. COGIC had come a long, long way from Lexington.

Research Questions/Methodology

In the course of this study I identify the interlocking social, cultural and religious contexts that contributed to Saints rise and decline, discuss how and why Saints took shape when and where it did and highlight Saints' relationship to black education. Additionally, one of the larger aims of the study is to understand what was Saints' primary function within the COGIC organization. What kind of education has been privileged in COGIC and why? How did the educational curricula at Saints reaffirm COGIC values, norms and practices? How did the practices, ethos and leadership of Saints undermine them (directly or indirectly)? In Pentecostal traditions how do educational institutions serve their parent organizations? How does this compare to more established groups? Why was the school important for so long? Why hasn't the denomination invested in liberal arts colleges as some of its contemporaries have?

To date, most of the views of Saints have been provided by COGIC insiders, typically untrained denominational historians. Lay COGIC historians Charles Pleas, Lucille Cornelius, Bobby Bean, and Glenda Goodson have all offered brief accounts of Saints' origins, though none as comprehensive as co-authors Dovie Marie Simmons and Olivia Martin's.⁶ In *Down Behind the Sun*, the biography of Dr. Arenia C. Mallory, who served as president of the institution

⁶ Bobby Bean, *This Is the Church of God in Christ*(Atlanta: Underground Epics Publishing 2001); Lucille J. Cornelius, *The Pioneer History of the Church of God in Christ*(Memphis: COGIC, 1975); Glenda Williams Goodson, "Emma F. Barron-Pioneer Cogic Educator," in *Auxillaries in Ministry Summer Convention*(St. Louis, MO: 2001); Charles H. Pleas, *Fifty Years Achievement: The Church of God in Christ*(Memphis: COGIC Public Relations, 1956; reprint, 1991).

from 1926 to 1976, Simmons and Martin describe Mallory's influence on the interior life of Saints and the surrounding community.⁷ She was a significant force in the life of Saints and, arguably, the major catalyst in the institution's growth and expansion.

While Mallory was undoubtedly a foundational figure, equally important to the birth and survival of the school were the local Mississippi clergy and congregations that kept the school alive. Further, to understand why a school that had its denomination's attention, endorsement, and financial support and a visionary, nationally renowned president closed its doors, it is necessary to contextualize Mallory's efforts—to situate them within the patterns in leadership within the denomination and the climate of black education nationally.

Several research questions drive this study. First, on what models of education did Saints draw? Established during a time in African-American history when racial uplift and self-help were the mantras of the day, to what extent was Saints influenced by these ideologies? Did it pattern itself after the Bible schools founded by Fundamentalists? To what relationships and networks was the school most connected and which of these ties was most critical for Saints' growth? Second, what were the major internal and external obstacles to the school's development? How did racial politics affect the school? How did the school fare in the post-Jim Crow era? Third, how were students shaped by their

⁷ Simmons and Martin, *Down Behind the Sun: the Story of Arenia Mallory* (Self-Published, 1983)

experience at Saints? What benefits, if any, were there to parochial, segregated education?

Data collection methods included participant observation, review of denominational material (publications, newsletters, etc.) and interviews. Because few secondary sources are readily available, I drew heavily on primary documents. The absence of a COGIC national archive presented major challenges to finding sources. To find church publications and internal histories, I pored through colleagues' personal collections and traveled to archives looking for traces of the Saints story in newspapers and manuscripts. Further, I interviewed former students, administrators, and teachers associated with the school and participated in a number of COGIC national meetings.

Review of Literature

Previous studies into Pentecostal educational life include explorations of the inner workings of white Pentecostal colleges. In *Pentecostalism and the Collegiate Institution*, Barry Cory documents the establishment of Evangel College, the liberal arts college under the auspices of the Assemblies of God (AOG). Cory analyzes how AOG officials decided to open the school and argues that those who advocated for the school were convinced that it was essential for AOGs survivability and legitimacy.⁸ Cory's study relies on analyses of organizations and leadership styles, and, while he offers some valuable insights

⁸ Barry Cory, "Pentecostalism and the Collegiate Institution: A Study in the Decision to Found Evangel College" (Dissertation Boston College, 1992).

into decision-making in Pentecostal churches and its impact on their educational institutions, the scope of his study is limited. Cory's analysis ends in 1955 and does not sufficiently probe the Pentecostal influence on the shape of Evangel's organizational form.

E. Gene Horton (1955) and Raphael Stephens (1981) both offer portraits of Lee College, a Church of God institution, in their respective studies.⁹ Horton traces the history of the college through 1952 and presents a purely descriptive account and general history. Alternatively, Stephens's study covers Lee College's development from its inception until 1977 and is concerned with the influence of Pentecostal tradition on the governance of the college. He concludes that the Church of God's Holiness-Pentecostal views impacted significant decisions made about the college.

Aaron Smith's self-published study of Aeon Bible College, an initiative of the historically black denomination, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW), provides some critical information about PAW's premier institution for theological education.¹⁰ Though important, Smith's study is not intended for a scholarly audience. The author's involvement with the school's administration colors his perspective. Smith comes across as scorned by his experiences with

⁹ Raphael Stephens, "A History of Governance at Lee College: A Study in Pentecostal Higher Education" (Dissertation, The College of William and Mary, 1981). Gene Horton, "A History of Lee Junior College, Cleveland, Tn" (Thesis University of South Dakota, 1955). The Church of God, a historic white Pentecostal denomination headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee, founded Lee College in 1918.

¹⁰Aaron Smith, *The Aeon Bible College Story*(Jaclyn Enterprises, 2007).

the school's inefficient administration.

Outside of studies of singular institutions, scholars (usually historians) have surveyed the development of Pentecostal education. Edith Blumhofer's review of Pentecostal higher education is one such reference.¹¹ Unfortunately, Blumhofer's survey makes few references to black Pentecostal educational institutions. She mentions, for example, that black Pentecostals gave their support to a school in Goldsboro, North Carolina, but does not provide the name of the school or the group involved. Similarly, historiographies of black education have lauded the contributions of Black Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists to African-American education without a word or footnote about black Pentecostal colleges and schools.

In short, studies of Pentecostal education in all its forms are severely lacking, and the scholarly works that do exist have tended to focus on white Pentecostal institutions. To date, there has been no scholarly full-length study of a black Pentecostal college or school.

A study of Saints Junior College and Academy is uniquely situated at the intersection of Pentecostal, Black Church, and African-American Educational Studies. Until the 1970s, Pentecostal studies had traditionally been absorbed under the umbrella of scholarship on American Evangelicalism. James Davidson Hunter's *American Evangelicalism* (1983) mentions the growing religious

¹¹Edith Blumhofer, "Pentecostal Colleges and Seminaries: A Selective Overview," in *Religious Higher Education in the United States: A Sourcebook*, ed. Thomas Hunt (New York: Garland Publishing 1996).

movement as part of the American Evangelical trajectories.¹² Hunter treats American Evangelicalism broadly, and as a result, the distinctive qualities of the Pentecostal movement are not probed in any depth. In the 1970s, Pentecostals as a sub-field gained momentum alongside the emergence of the Charismatic movement as Pentecostals began writing their own histories. It was in this context that Vinson Synan's history of the Holiness-Pentecostal movement made a huge impact. Professional organizations such as the Society for Pentecostal Studies, established in 1970, supported the production of new scholarship on the movement.¹³ By the end of the decade, a small but important cadre of texts representing a wide range of disciplines helped advance the promising field. Robert Anderson's *Vision of the Disinherited* and Richard Quebedeaux's *The New Charismatics* remain some of the strongest texts produced about Pentecostalism to date.¹⁴

Black Pentecostals received mixed treatment in the early wave of Pentecostal scholarship. The early texts, concerned primarily with reporting on the events, people, and places related to the movement, failed to acknowledge

¹² James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism : Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity*(New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1982).

¹³ For an overview of the religious politics and racial dimensions that shaped the Society for Pentecostal Studies, see SPS History at <http://www.sps-usa.org/about/home.htm>.

¹⁴ Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics : The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism*, 1st ed.(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

the persistent and overwhelming presence of black Americans and their contributions. This disconnect is perhaps best illustrated in the interpretations of American Pentecostalism's rightful founder. Through their writing and participation in academic professional organizations, scholars such as James Tinney, Leonard Lovett, and William Turner called mainstream Pentecostal scholarship to task for its omission of black sources. All three criticized these texts for their dismissal or downright denial of William Seymour's role as founder of the movement at large. Tinney's passion for promoting knowledge about black Pentecostalism led to his publication of *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism*.¹⁵ For three years, Tinney, a professor of journalism at Howard University, edited and published the academic journal and kept a meticulous library of sources. Tinney's main goal was to gather the scattered sources in one place and to elevate black Pentecostal studies as a field worthy of attention.¹⁶

Black Church studies emerged as a sub-discipline in the 1970s, though scholarship on the black church has been produced for much longer. In the wake of demands for Black Studies departments at colleges and universities around

¹⁵ James Tinney, *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism* (1977-1980).

¹⁶ Leonard Lovett's and William Turner's dissertations remain important references for contemporary students. Lovett went on to become the first dean of the first accredited Pentecostal seminary in the United States. William Turner has served over two decades as a professor of Religion at Duke Divinity School.

the country, Black Church Studies gained increasing popularity.¹⁷ The Black Church Studies program was established at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in 1969. Similar departments were established at Vanderbilt, Duke, Candler, and Fuller in the coming decades. Inherent in the field is a concern for the integration of theory and practice to build a bridge between the pew and the classroom. Yet black Pentecostals still did not receive as much attention as they deserved in black church scholarship. Much of the early scholarship dismissed Pentecostals as insignificant religious sects and/or failed to see them as an integral part of the institutional black church as a whole.

In recent years, scholarship on black Pentecostals has received greater attention as the rapid burgeoning of the movement has demanded critical study. In 2008, for the first time in its history, the Black Church Scholars Fellowship pre-AAR meeting was hosted at a Pentecostal church. St. Steven's Church of God in Christ welcomed the group in San Diego, California. At the 2008 meeting, Black Theology and Pentecostal Studies hosted a joint panel featuring prominent voices in Black Pentecostal Studies. Though these developments may be insignificant to some, in my view, they indicate the growing respect for and embrace of black Pentecostals as members of the black church family.

Still, though it is no longer ignored as part of the black church tradition, black Pentecostalism remains under-theorized, and Black Pentecostal Studies has not been fully integrated into Black Church Studies. The lack of integration is

¹⁷ See the Introduction in Stacey Floyd-Thomas and others, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

surprising, given the seemingly exponential growth of black Pentecostal congregations in the United States. It is only by looking carefully at the intersections of these related sub-fields that we can begin to examine the life of Saints Junior College and Academy.

Theoretical Assumptions

W. E. B. Du Bois, unquestionably one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century, pioneered scholarship on the social problems plaguing America. The scope of Du Bois's intellectual contributions was far-reaching. For decades, he offered social commentaries and analysis on topics from politics to economics. It was the Harvard- and Fisk University-trained sociologist's musings on race that had the most lasting impact. Du Bois famously introduced the metaphor of the "veil" and the concept of double consciousness to capture the complexity of black life in America:

One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.¹⁸

Du Bois's observations are echoed decades later in the work of Christian Smith and Michael Emerson. In *Divided by Race*, Smith and Emerson argue that

¹⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, Henry Louis Gates, and Terri Hume Oliver, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). p. 11; Feminist theorists have rendered critiques of "double-consciousness". See Deborah K. King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988).

America is a racialized society and that its religious institutions have been impacted by this reality:

We argue that religion as structured in America, is unable to make a great impact on the racialized society. In fact, far from knocking down racial barriers, religion generally serves to maintain these historical divides, and helps to develop new ones. . . . The structure of religion in America is conducive to freeing groups from the direct control of other groups, but not to addressing the fundamental divisions that exist in our current racialized society.¹⁹

Smith and Emerson set out to determine what Evangelicals thought, if anything, about living in a society where race influenced the structure of institutions. They found that many Evangelicals did not see the effects of race on their faith—or on institutional affiliations, for that matter.

By contrast, this study assumes race as a central category of analysis in the organization of American religion. The Black Pentecostals about whom I write developed a distinct set of patterns, institutions, and decisions about education that was conditioned by their racial consciousness, a consciousness that played out in the organization of their school. Exploration of Saints as an institution necessitates a consideration of its location as a black institution. And because of its ties to the Pentecostal world, its rise, development, success, and failure must take both of these contexts—its being black and Pentecostal—into consideration.

¹⁹ Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 18.

Limitations

The story of Saints is not about Pentecostals everywhere at all times. It is about a particular school in a particular place in a particular time. The aim of my research is to illuminate the forces that have impacted the school's development and that have hindered COGIC's educational program in general. The conclusions drawn from this story are directly applicable to COGIC, but they shed light on some of the challenges facing other black Pentecostal groups that have pioneered institutions of their own.

Chapter Organization

Chapter One traces the rise and evolution of Pentecostal schools. From participating in Bible colleges started by other religious groups to building their own seminaries, black Pentecostals have been actively engaged in a variety of educational endeavors. Concerns of black Pentecostals paralleled those of white Pentecostals in some respects—both were deeply concerned about the secularizing effects of theological and cultural liberalism and founded training centers for missionaries, clergy, and lay religious workers as a response. I discuss the genealogy of the racial divisions in the Pentecostal movement and suggest that race structured the landscape of Pentecostal educational institutions. The schools that black Pentecostals founded were disconnected from the networks of white Pentecostal institutions.

The chapter also situates Saints in the black educational world. It calls attention to how the school's structure resembled that of other rural private

black schools. Saints remained distinct from them, however, by retaining a commitment to certain theological tenets. The religious mood of the campus was heavily influenced by Saints' embrace of Holiness-Pentecostal values and COGIC traditions.

In Chapter Two, I offer a glimpse of Saints' campus life. Its embrace of women's leadership and unwavering commitment to black Holiness-Pentecostal religious values set Saints apart from other black schools. Dr. Arenia Mallory, president from 1926 to 1976, relied on support from the Women's Department of COGIC. She also drew support from one of the most influential women's organizations of the day, the National Council of Negro Women, headed by renowned educator Mary McLeod Bethune. These "gendered networks" and Mallory's charisma were critical to the school's success.

Where possible this chapter features the voices of former students. Former Saints students' reflections on their experiences demonstrate that small colleges can have a tremendous impact on society at large. Saints became a training ground for future COGIC clergy and imparted valuable character education that is rarely seen today. I utilize Vanessa Siddle Walker's idea of "institutional caring" to argue that such small, rural, black educational institutions had unique value.

Chapter Three focuses on COGIC's internal structure. COGIC's tendency to rely on charismatic individuals to drive its educational efforts made it difficult for the organization to maintain one of the most innovative Pentecostal educational institutions of the twentieth century. COGIC struggled with

management of charismatic leadership after the death of its founder. The relationship between the school's president, Dr. Arenia Mallory, and COGIC's founder, Charles Mason is examined. Mallory's relationship to Mason provided some protection from opponents within the organization, but, when Mason died in 1961, Mallory's ability to negotiate for resources with the National church body diminished.

At the national level, Mason's successor endorsed neither Saints as a critical part of the national church's program or Mallory as a leader. Instead he poured the organization's resources into other endeavors that included plans for building another COGIC college in Memphis. Further, the new administration made no plans to secure Saints' longevity. For the majority of its history, orchestration of the school's operations had been left primarily to the vision of Mallory. When she died in 1977, Saints struggled to create a new identity, as Mallory and the institution had been inextricably linked for over fifty years. Chapter Four argues that church-sect theory offers a useful theoretical framework for interpreting the Saints saga. As COGIC moved from exhibiting more "sect-like" to more "church-like" qualities, the role the school played in national church politics was significantly diminished. Following the death of J.O. Patterson, Louis Henry Ford, emerged as presiding bishop of the denomination with plans to re-open the school. Ford's efforts prevailed, and he successfully reopened Saints; but when he died, the school's future was doomed. While it was acknowledged that the school had a positive impact on students, Saints was increasingly viewed as an antiquated educational model that did not fit with the

COGICs new image as a cosmopolitan Pentecostal denomination. During these years the school served as a symbol of COGICs past, not its future.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Saints model, suggest directions for future research and speculate about the future of COGICs educational institutions.

CHAPTER ONE

Mapping Black Pentecostal Educational Networks

Frustration with sweeping changes in America's educational, social, and religious institutions prompted Pentecostals at the turn of the twentieth century to develop a host of parallel social and religious institutions of their own. As mainline Protestants adopted more liberal positions and interpretations of the Bible that discounted spiritual creeds and codes of holy living, Pentecostals sought spaces where their viewpoints could be honored. They created socially affirming environments where they could associate with like-minded Holy Ghost-filled "saints." Publishing houses and radio media, revivals and church conventions made up the extensive network of Pentecostal social outlets that helped sustain members who were forbidden from participating in many of the social pastimes of the day, such as playing cards and going to the movies. These institutions also served a religious function, connecting believers to the broader Pentecostal world and galvanizing them to become even more fervent about their faith.

Bible colleges and institutes were an important part of this elaborate web of parallel institutions. Established in response to the secularization of America's institutions of higher learning, Bible schools and institutes were environments where students could affirm their faith and be shielded from the criticisms of liberalized, mainstream Christians and/or nonbelievers. Hunter explains that "Bible institutes and colleges emerged with the expressed intention of training

ministers, missionaries, and lay people in defense and extension of the central doctrines of the Christian faith.”²⁰ Edith Blumhofer argues that early Pentecostals were ambivalent about liberal arts education and sought to protect their young people from the wrong kind of education, the kind that would challenge their faith:

Early in their history, many Pentecostals concluded that higher standards of denominational education had eroded the spirituality of the historic denominations; they responded with wariness to this challenge. Committed to “contending earnestly for the faith” by confronting people with the need of divine redemption yet determined to replace fervent experience with intellectual rigor, early Pentecostals hoped to shelter their youth from the kinds of learning that seemed to challenge faith.²¹

Over time, Blumhofer reports, Pentecostals amended their educational preferences to accommodate “changing class and economic realities as well as mainstreaming and institutionalization.”²²

A survey of black Pentecostals educational endeavors appear to trouble Blumhofer’s generalizations about Pentecostal skepticism of the liberal arts and education that emphasized critical thinking. There were certainly black Pentecostals who were openly hostile to secular education. But many more were

²⁰ James Davidson Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 31.

²¹ Blumhofer, 557.

²² Ibid.

not intimidated by secular educational environments. With fewer options than white Pentecostals, black Pentecostals matriculated through a variety of educational contexts—accredited and non-accredited Bible colleges, historically black colleges and universities and white colleges, church-based clergy training programs and established mainline seminaries. Racially conscious, they pursued schooling that would prepare them for engagement with a secular world that could be doubly hostile to their existence as Pentecostals and as black Americans. They created spaces for spiritual development in a variety of collegiate contexts. These Christians were as concerned about increasing literacy as they were about becoming ambassadors for Christ.

Racial Dimensions of Pentecostal Education

The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 is recognized as the birthplace of American Pentecostalism. News of the “unusual” worship services headquartered in Los Angeles and led by a black Holiness minister, William Seymour, spread widely and rapidly. Lay persons and clergy from far and near came to participate, observe, sometimes criticize the religious experiment. Witnesses have described the Azusa Street experience as a series of revivals with little structure where participants were empowered to preach, pray, and speak in tongues. Participants recalled fantastic stories of miraculous healings and new converts who, after having been slain in the spirit, were able to do incredible things such as witnessing to others in a language they had never spoken or playing instruments that they had never touched before. This freedom of

expression in worship attracted both critics and curious on-lookers. To the uninitiated, Pentecostal worship seemed chaotic and deviant. Formal liturgies were tossed aside, and spontaneous, lay congregational participation were brought in (or revived). The "saints" defied traditional standards by emphasizing reliance on the Holy Spirit.

A century later, the story of the Azusa Street Revival has taken on mythic proportions. Pentecostal adherents today still celebrate a time in their history when Pentecostal expression was on full display. At Azusa, they nostalgically profess, not only did the Spirit move freely and unfettered, but that the Holy Spirit compelled even the toughest boundaries to be broken. Racial cleavages were dismantled, Pentecostals recall. Often quoted is Frank Bartleman, a witness to the Azusa Street Revival who professed that the "color line had been washed away in the blood."²³

Scholars' characterizations of Azusa have focused on William Seymour's vision for racial equality that brought together revival attendees from all walks of life during a time when racial segregation was the order of the day. But the years of interracial cooperation were short-lived, historians report, as the breakdown in racial relations in the years immediately following the Azusa revival led to the formation of separate white and black denominations. The years 1906 to 1914 saw the Assemblies of God and the Church of God become denominational homes to large numbers of white Pentecostals while the newly formed black

²³ Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles*(Los Angeles 1925), 54. See www.ccel.org for a pdf version of the book.

denominations included the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (1906), the Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God (1916), and the Church of God in Christ (1907). While some Pentecostal denominations remained integrated, the vast majority of congregations were divided by race.

Pentecostal historian Grant Wacker insists that the rise of separate denominations was not sufficient evidence of racial antagonism between black and white Pentecostals.²⁴ Wacker challenges the popular narrative that the interracial harmony evidenced at Azusa deteriorated into racial disharmony a short time after the revival began. He highlights evidence of interracial fellowship beyond Azusa to counter this popular tale. Wacker concludes that race did not inform Pentecostals' theological thinking. Writing of white and black Pentecostal publications, Wacker observes, "That white editors said little about race is hardly surprising but black editors seemed equally indifferent."²⁵ With respect to the ensuing racial disunity Wacker concludes,

Most whites did not think about the problem very much. Most blacks probably *did* think about the problem very much but, with the exceptions noted, did not use the language of the revival to express their grievances or their aspirations.²⁶

Wacker's analysis, though based on extensive review of primary materials omits

²⁴ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2001).

²⁵ G. Wacker, 234.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

compelling evidence to the contrary. R. C. Lawson, founder of the historic black Apostolic denomination, the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, was an early critic of American racism. He denounced racist doctrine and belief on Christian grounds in a small tract-style booklet titled *The Anthropology of Jesus Christ our Kinsman*.²⁷ Lawson emphasized his belief that racism is not consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ and he proclaims the need for black Christians to vocalize their opposition to racism:

It is time to protest. If the white brethren don't preach the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man irrespective of color or nationality, and exemplify the true spirit of brotherhood and equality to all, their civilization is doomed. However, God will bring deliverance from another quarter, and will raise up a people who will preach it, and exemplify it in their lives and relationship to their fellowmen.

They cannot love, respect, and esteem their colored brethren as themselves according to the scriptures, because they look upon the darker races as inferior both in blood and intellect. This is the result of their civilization which is biased toward the Negro in every phase and department, but especially in the four main departments, History, Art, Science and Religion. Our white brethren being the product of this civilization, it naturally follows that they are biased too, in their mental and spiritual makeup.²⁸

²⁷ R. C. Lawson, *The Anthropology of Jesus Christ our Kinsman*, circa 1925.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 1.

Lawson's writings confront Wacker's charge that black Pentecostals were not reflecting theologically and in writing about matters of race.

I do not mean to suggest that Wacker is naïve. He acknowledges that some white Pentecostals were less than enthusiastic about embracing their black Pentecostal brothers and sisters. His argument that the visions of vicious racial disagreements are largely unsupported and did not characterize the vast majority of Pentecostal relations should be taken seriously. My point here is simply that many black Pentecostals were, in fact, racially conscious, whether or not it showed up in their theological writings. America was deeply racialized, and there was no way for Pentecostals, black or white, to avoid this.

Race structured Pentecostals' institutional involvements. In some cases racism influenced where they could and could not go to school. Racism was a barrier for some black Pentecostals who wanted to matriculate into white Pentecostal Bible schools. Famously, William Seymour was made to sit outside of his mentor's school in accommodation to the racial codes of the day.²⁹ Seymour's mentor, Charles Fox Parham, shunned his former student when he visited Los Angeles after the Azusa Street Revival was in full swing and witnessed the "race-mixing" in the worship services.³⁰ The scars of racial discrimination would persist well into the twentieth century.

²⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 93.

³⁰ Synan, 100.

Early Twentieth-Century White Pentecostal Schools

Within the first quarter of the twentieth century, nearly every Pentecostal denomination, small or large, tried its hand at educational entrepreneurship—with mixed success. Pentecostals schools prioritized winning souls. As pre-millenarian dispensationalists, Pentecostals subscribed to the belief that the End Time was near. Every believer was charged with the task of witnessing to lost souls before Jesus returned to the earth to collect the faithful. Those who heeded the call to conversion were destined to eternal life, while those who ignored the invitation to be saved would suffer one thousand years of tribulation on earth before being thrown in the fires of Hell.

Because of their pressing concern to save the lost, Pentecostals were relentless about training missionaries for domestic and international mission fields. The urgent need to evangelize gave rise to the first wave of schools that were concerned primarily with the training of ministerial workers. Rescuing souls from fire and brimstone was a top priority that greatly influenced the structure and coursework of their schools. The Bible was the primary course of study; subjects unrelated to the spread of the Gospel but which might help the students' mission/ministry work were secondary.

Early Pentecostal schools competed with Bible schools and practical ministry schools founded by Fundamentalists. These groups shared many beliefs, including the anticipation of the imminent return of Christ and the centrality of the Bible as an everyday guide. Both placed strong emphasis on

personal piety and were generally skeptical of denominationalism. At the core of both groups' anxiety about mainstream religion was concern over the corrosive effects of modernism. They lamented the loss of America's universities to liberal Protestants and lobbied for a vision of education that did not contradict biblical "truths."

However, Fundamentalists parted ways with moderate and liberal Evangelicals over the concerns about liberals' acquiescence to more modernist interpretations of the Bible. By the 1930s, the Fundamentalists were a distinct religious group that became nationally known through their failed attempt in the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925 to eliminate the teaching of Darwinism in public schools.³¹ Some Pentecostals took advantage of the schools that were part of the Fundamentalist network, enrolling in places such as Moody Bible College and Nyack College, nationally recognized centers of Fundamentalist intellectual life.³²

At first glance, the presence of Pentecostals at Fundamentalist schools suggests a positive relationship between the two movements. But, as George Marsden points out, Pentecostals did not become integrated into the

³¹ For more on the emergence of American Fundamentalism see D Hart, *Defending the Faith: J Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2003); George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press 2006).

³² For further discussion of the influence and scope of Fundamentalist schools and institutions see Joel Carpenter's "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelicalism, 1929-1942," *Church History*, Vol. 49, 1980. See also Virginia Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 33.

institutional life of Fundamentalism and therefore had no significant bearing on its development and evolution:

Despite close resemblances of Pentecostals to “fundamentalists,” Pentecostals were only tangentially part of fundamentalism of the 1920s. Pentecostals often identified themselves as “fundamentalists” read fundamentalist literature, and adopted anti-Modernist and anti-evolution rhetoric; yet other fundamentalists seldom recognized them as allies or called them into their councils. The influence, then, was largely in only one direction, from fundamentalism to Pentecostalism.³³

Marsden’s reading of the relationship between Pentecostals and their Fundamentalist cousins helps explain why some Pentecostals did not feel at home in Fundamentalist Bible schools. As open as these schools were to students from all denominations, the learning environments they cultivated were not entirely amenable to the distinctly Pentecostal worldview. Subtle but significant doctrinal disagreements over issues such as the role of the Holy Spirit or the “ecstatic” element of Pentecostal worship drove a wedge between the two traditions.³⁴ As Grant Wacker notes, Pentecostals, “like most sectarians, scrupulously sought to articulate and preserve the information that seemed relevant to the definition of their own identity.”³⁵

³³ Marsden, 94.

³⁴ Kevin M. Taylor, *American Evangelicals and Religious Diversity: Subcultural Education, Theological Boundaries, and the Revitalization of Tradition* (Greenwich: Information Age Publishing 2006), 38.

³⁵ Wacker, 152.

The earliest Pentecostal schools were often unstable. These fleeting institutions, sometimes started by individuals who were not connected to any overarching organization, took root in all parts of the country. In the Pentecostal church, where ministers needed no formal ordination requirements, anyone who claimed to have inspiration from the Holy Spirit could start a church—or a school, for that matter. Leaders and attendees of these small, under-funded, and under-attended schools often claimed to rely only on God for their most basic needs. Sometimes tuition was not required. Students needed no academic prerequisites, only a desire to engage in intense study of the Bible and a commitment to evangelize. In some schools, basic literacy was taught, but only as it related to the evangelistic mission. Some of the earliest Pentecostal schools included the Church of God's Lee College (est. 1918, Cleveland, TN), International Pentecostal Holiness Church's Emmanuel College (est. 1919, Franklin Springs, GA), and Central Bible Institute pioneered by the Assemblies of God (est. 1922, Springfield, MO).

After WWII, America experienced widespread economic growth. According to Edith Blumhofer, as Pentecostal denominations became more financially stable, they invested more money in their educational endeavors. New government-imposed standards on schools offering degrees in chaplaincy resulted in some swift changes. When the American Association of Biblical Higher Education (with a few Pentecostals on the founding board) began to accredit schools in 1947, a number of Pentecostal schools lined up to go through

the accreditation process.³⁶ Blumhofer maintains that with the emergence of more financially stable denominations, some of the makeshift Bible schools were saved from extinction by merging with newer, more stable institutions re-energized by the post-war economy.

As a result of the infusion of new dollars and enthusiasm for education nationally, the quantity, quality, and variety of Pentecostal schools increased significantly along with most other schools. A few schools ventured into the liberal arts, a change that was difficult for some denominations to swallow. Members of the Assemblies of God General Assembly fought with opponents within the denomination to establish liberal arts-oriented Evangel College in 1953.³⁷ The inclusion of secular subjects seemed to many in the AOG to be unnecessary, and they challenged the AOG's commitment to Bible-based education. Evangel struggled to gain regular financial support from Assemblies of God congregations that were leery of its purpose.

Outside of denominationally based schools, Pentecostal personalities built schools. Televangelist Oral Roberts founded Oral Roberts University in 1963 and Pat Robertson established CBN University, now Regent University in 1978. Older schools like Emmanuel and Lee Colleges expanded their offerings. Emmanuel had begun as a high school but became a college in 1939. Lee College followed a similar path, adding a junior college in 1941 and a four-year Bible

³⁶ Blumhofer, 564.

³⁷ Barry Hugh Corey, *Pentecostalism and the Collegiate Institution: On the Decision to Found Evangel College*, Dissertation, Boston College, 1992.

College program in 1953.³⁸

The constellation of Pentecostal schools—from Bible colleges to four-year liberal arts institutions—experienced in one way or another the ongoing and dynamic tension between the “burning and the learning.” J. Stephen Conn, son of a prominent bishop in the Assemblies of God, writes about the tension between the classroom and the pulpit in his autobiography, *Growing Up Pentecostal*:

There was another even more compelling motivation to leave school and launch out into full-time ministry. As a true believer, I was convinced that souls were dying and going to Hell all around me every day. Jesus was coming again at any minute. I genuinely believed that more likely than not, the rapture would take place before I could graduate. What a shame it would be, to be sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture about winning the lost to Jesus when the trumpet sounded! Instead, I felt I needed to be out there doing all I could to rescue the perishing before it was too late.³⁹

Conn’s personal struggle encapsulates some of the classic issues that have confronted Pentecostal students and educators. In the Pentecostal tradition, Spirit intelligence commanded high respect and rivaled excellence in knowledge acquired from books. Pentecostal schools celebrated “Spirit knowledge” as an important corrective to knowledge obtained solely by reason. In charges reminiscent of the Great Awakenings, Pentecostals accused the mainline

³⁸ Institutional Self-Study Report of Lee College Prepared for The Commission on Colleges of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, February 1973.

³⁹ J Stephen Conn, *Growing up Pentecostal*(Xulon Press, 2006), 108.

churches of making idols of Reason and neglecting the important matter of individual salvation. The tension between Spirit and Reason in Evangelical education would persist into the late twentieth century.

The Education of Black Pentecostal Clergy

Surveys of Pentecostal education have neglected to include accounts of black Pentecostals' institutions and general orientations toward education. The biographies of several prominent Pentecostal clergy suggest that black Pentecostals took advantage of educational contexts outside of the white Pentecostal school matrix. In the Pentecostal tradition where the belief that one could only be called by God to minister, man-made institutions were not viewed as critical to the success of a minister. Iain McRoberts notes,

Among the Pentecostals, black people were no longer disadvantaged because of their color or lack of education, for the Spirit could minister through whoever was yielded to Her influence. No longer was the pulpit closed to those lacking seminary training. The Holy Spirit qualified and empowered those whose hearts were converted rather than those whose heads were filled. Here, black and white, the poor and the illiterate—all could share and participate fully in the life and worship of the Pentecostal congregation.⁴⁰

Either for intellectual enrichment or to enhance their ministries, despite their lack of formal educational requirements for ministry, many black Pentecostals

⁴⁰ Iain McRoberts, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 84.

nonetheless sought education. Bible schools and related colleges and institutions supplemented their spiritual qualifications with academic skills or deepened their engagement with the world around them.

Charles Mason enrolled in Bible college to prepare for life of ministry. The future COGIC founder was born to former slaves, Jerry and Eliza Mason in Bartlett, Mississippi, in 1866. His family eventually moved to Plummersville, Arkansas, to escape a devastating yellow fever outbreak in 1878.⁴¹ Mason and countless other black children living in the post-Reconstruction South were still constrained by an agricultural economy of tenet farming and sharecropping. Opportunities for formal education were limited, as were the professions they could eventually pursue. Racism and poverty hindered the development of adequate schools for black children in the rural areas. Though Mason was afforded few opportunities for schooling, he learned valuable life lessons in the fields of rural Arkansas and developed a deep faith. As a teenager, Mason would experience a miraculous healing from a debilitating sickness that almost killed him before he dedicated his life to Christian service. Baptized at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Arkansas, Mason had received his “call” to preach soon thereafter. Charles Mason would go on to co-found the Church of God in Christ with his friend in ministry, Charles Price Jones.

⁴¹ Elsie Mason, *The History and Life Work of Bishop C. H. Mason*(Memphis, TN: 1924), 7.

Mason enrolled in Arkansas Baptist College. But, to his dismay the training was not what he expected. The young minister clashed with his teachers over their understandings of the Bible. The experience convinced him that “there was no salvation in schools and colleges,” and Mason transferred to the Ministers division of the school after a short stay. He reports:

I entered the Arkansas Baptist College November 1, 1893 and stayed there about three months. I still entered the same so that an education would help me out in preaching. The Lord showed me that there was no salvation in schools and colleges; for the way they were conducted grieved my very soul. I packed my books, arose and bade them a final farewell, to follow Jesus with the Bible as my sacred guide. Not long after this, when I began to lift up Christ by word, example and precept in my ministry, the word drew people from the streets, roadsides, and from the upmost parts of the country. Very soon the word of God began to sanctify the people everywhere he sent me. Bless His holy name.⁴²

Mason’s contemporary, Jefferson Davis Diggs, a prominent leader in the United Holy Church of America, attended two historically black colleges and universities. Born in 1865, Diggs earned degrees from Bennett College in Greensboro, NC, and Livingstone College, a school under the direction of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Later in his career as a church statesman,

⁴² J. O. Patterson, German R. Ross, and Julia Mason Atkins, *History and Formative Years of the Church of God in Christ with Excerpts from the Life and Works of Its Founder--Bishop C.H. Mason*(Memphis: The Church of God in Christ Publishing House 1969), 16. According to David Daniels, after three months Mason left the liberal arts division of the school and graduated from the Ministers’ Institute instead in 1895. See David Daniels, “By Sound Doctrine: The Theological Legacy of Bishop Charles Harrison Mason” in *The Whole Truth*, 30.

Diggs was awarded an honorary doctorate. Diggs was instrumental in the founding of Slater Academy (later known as Winston-Salem Teachers College). William Turner describes Diggs as an ambassador for education within the denomination who pushed for the training of the church's ministers. Turner quotes Diggs's 1932 address given to general body of the United Holy Church of America:

The preacher, therefore, who refuses to improve his mind and prepare for his calling will involuntarily take his place in Isaiah's proverbial class of "dumb dogs" with few or none to hear him bark. Therefore, the Church should stand fast in what our educational department has already attained. Our Bible Training School should not only be maintained but augmented by lengthening terms, additional teachers, and also by reasonable requirements of worthy grades of candidates for the ministry by Presbytery Boards through the bounds of the Church.⁴³

Diggs used his formal education to serve as an invaluable spokesperson for theological education in the United Holy Church.

Smallwood Williams, founder of the predominantly African-American denomination, Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, took advantage of a mix of educational training. After his conversion to Pentecostalism in 1919, Williams studied under the tutelage of his spiritual mentor and pastor, R. C. Lawson, before earning a degree from American Bible College in Chicago in 1947 and completing courses at Howard University School of Religion and the Robert

⁴³ Jr. William Clair Turner, "The United Holy Church of America: A Study in Black Holiness-Pentecostalism" (Dissertation Duke University 1984), 132.

Terrell Law School. While Williams was tutored in the Bible by his pastor, he wrote that moving to Washington D.C. to attend Howard signified the start of his “serious training.”⁴⁴ At Howard, Williams was profoundly influenced by his professors, especially Benjamin Mays, Mordecai Johnson, and Howard Thurman, men whose scholarship, eloquence, and racial consciousness inspired him.

The former boy preacher did not graduate from Howard University School of Religion, but was greatly moved by what he learned there. Williams appreciated critical thinking, and he sought opportunities to sharpen these skills:

All writers theological and otherwise have blind spots in their vision. We should be aware of this and accept the truth in evaluating the truth they voice. I have always held the position that it is profitable to read opposing viewpoints in shaping one’s own. One can find out whether his particular thinking stands up to honest criticism that way perhaps more than any other way. I’m never satisfied with an intellectual position until I have examined it carefully in the face of strong opposing viewpoints. I seek out intellectual honesty. I don’t appreciate the “hothouse” mentality that can’t tolerate the icy wind of criticism.⁴⁵

He proclaimed his love of reading, playfully declaring, “I read books like I eat fish, carefully separating the meat from the bones.” Williams displayed high

⁴⁴ Smallwood Williams, *This is My Story* (Washington, D.C.: Wm. Willoughby Publishers, 1981), 52.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 55.

regard for formal education, but he did not believe that learning should be confined to the classroom. He embraced his diversity of learning experiences inside and outside of the classroom:

I am proudest to say I have continued my education with post-graduate courses in the School of Hard Knocks. My education has been a continuing process, with a wonderful library of books as my best teachers and they are among my best companions. But somehow, there is nothing more educating than experience.⁴⁶

In his sketch of Williams in *Black Religious Intellectuals*, Clarence Taylor argues that Williams “became immersed in two worlds, one of African American folk religion, the other of academic learning and scholarship”.⁴⁷ Taylor speculates,

From Pentecostalism he developed a world view that emphasized that God was a constant intervening force in one’s life. For Williams, Christianity was a religion that helped those oppressed by racism and class exploitation. . . . From higher education he developed a sense of the social gospel and the incentive to fight for racial injustice and a passion for worldly knowledge.⁴⁸

Taylor separates Williams from other social justice-oriented ministers he profiled, arguing that Williams was not interested in mobilizing the oppressed, but rather “he accepted the notion that God selects men to lead others out of the

⁴⁶ Williams, 54.

⁴⁷ Clarence Taylor, *Black Religious Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge), 54.

⁴⁸ Taylor, 56.

social quagmire.” Taylor’s comments suggest that William’s vision of social change was perhaps closer to a DuBoisian “Talented Tenth” model where God-fearing, educated men would be responsible for leading the masses out of social disarray.

Williams reflected on the limited variety of schools built by and for Pentecostals and charged the lack to ignorance, money, and competition. “Our white Pentecostal brothers and sisters grasped the relationship between faith and works much more quickly and built schools, well-supported and well-attended, years before, while black brothers were still arguing among themselves,” he contended.⁴⁹ Williams’s sentiments reflected the desire of many black Pentecostals who wanted a school of their own.

Pentecostals’ Encounters in Black Colleges

Non-theological black schools tended to be religiously oriented and conservative-leaning, and, while not always accommodating to black Pentecostals’ unique religious perspectives, they were for some viable alternatives to specialized religious schools. Many black Pentecostals matriculated through historically black colleges and universities. Clashes between Howard University Pentecostal students and the conservative Howard University administration in the 1940s and 1960s reflected long-standing tensions between black Pentecostalism and other strands of black Protestantism.

⁴⁹ Williams, 85.

In response to mainline black Protestants, black Pentecostals promoted themselves as reformers, calling the church to task on its departure from “Holiness.” There was an underlying class critique. They preached that the mainstream churches had become consumed with bourgeois values, ignoring the old-time religion of the Great Awakening prophets and the indigenous religious practices of their ancestors. Though some black Pentecostals matriculated in historically black colleges and universities, their journey was not always smooth. Among other black Protestant organizations, Black Pentecostals were sometimes ostracized because of their sharp criticism of other non-Pentecostal denominations and their revival of “indigenous” worship practices.

Black Pentecostal students at Howard University in the 1960s fought systematic discrimination on the part of Howard faculty and administration to establish the United Pentecostal Association (UPA). Their desire to create their own networks of spiritual support was twofold. First, the Howard administration and faculty had adopted a formal “high church” model of worship for the chapel. They were unwilling to accommodate Pentecostal worship styles, leaving the Pentecostal students on campus feeling underserved and unsupported. Second, because their faith demanded abstinence from the “things of this world,” including playing cards, listening to secular music, and going to parties, Pentecostal students sought to create spaces where their “peculiar” religious practices were respected and celebrated.

The Pentecostal Student and Youth Conference (PSYC) was organized in the late 1940s, and the United Pentecostal Association established in the 1960s brought students from different Pentecostal backgrounds together. Students in the UPA served as a support group for one other, often gathering informally to discuss the Bible and to worship together. Sylvester Servance, a former president of the UPA, recounted that the Thursday afternoon fellowships led by UPA students became very popular, attracting hundreds of students to Drew Hall to sing and pray. These intimate worship services served as an outlet for some who missed the environments of their home churches. Former student leader James Lewis testified that the UPA helped students live out their Christian commitments:

We were there to demonstrate that one could live holy in a university atmosphere. Our witness would be through hard work in the class rooms, sanctified living in the dormitory, and activities conducted in a timely and orderly fashion.⁵⁰

After much protest, Howard approved Steven Short, a local Pentecostal minister, as the first official Pentecostal chaplain for Howard University and allowed students to build the William Seymour House.⁵¹

⁵⁰ James O. Lewis, "The United Pentecostal Association" in *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (1978), 35.

⁵¹ See James Tinney, "Steve Short a 'First' on Campus," (April 5, 1975) in *Washington Afro-American*, "Pentecostal Center—A Long Labor of Love," (Thursday, April 5, 1976) Sec. B, p. 2 in *The Washington Star*, or Janis Johnson, "Pentecostalism on Campus: Howard University Chaplain Stresses Scholarly

Whatever their disagreements, segregation required cooperation at best or tolerance at worst among individuals from different black Protestant traditions. Despite their disagreements, black Pentecostals found peaceable means to deal with members of the black Protestant mainstream. Black Pentecostals lived, worked, and went to school with their black Protestant brothers and sisters as the racial mores of the day all but mandated that they learn how to coexist. Race united the groups in a common mission—the gospel of literacy and racial uplift. The effect of this forced interaction was greater cooperation between black Protestants and black Pentecostals than between white and black Pentecostals—an alliance that would have implications for black Pentecostal schools nearly fifty years after the first educational campaigns. At the denominational level black Pentecostals and their black Protestant counterparts would continue to disagree about some core issues, but their concern for the general well-being of African-Americans (or perhaps their inability to escape each other) compelled them. Bound together by common interests in racial uplift, black Pentecostals and black mainline Protestants pressed for education reform and employed (sometimes very different) tactics to achieve this goal.

Schools of Their Own

The schools that black Pentecostals founded themselves ranged from secondary schools to seminaries. It is hard to determine just how many black

Image,” *Washington Post*, (May 27, 1977), p. B8 for more coverage of the Howard University Pentecostal Student Movement.

Pentecostal schools there were. Due to poor record-keeping, there are no good statistics of how many were founded--or how many failed, for that matter. Of the twenty-eight schools listed in Charles Edwin Jones's survey of black Holiness Pentecostal schools, the majority were established after 1940.⁵² Almost all of the black Pentecostal denominations operated schools of one kind or another. The Church of God in Christ ran schools in Arkansas and Texas. Bishop Page, the first bishop of the COGIC in Texas, helped establish Page Normal and Industrial School in Hearne, Texas. Conceived in 1917, Page Normal and Industrial School was officially opened in January 1927. Texas jurisdictions were organized in such a way as to support the growth of the school. Like its predecessor, the school "trained students in the principles of holiness and fundamentals of education through activities on and off campus."⁵³ Led by Mother Emma F. Bradley Barron, future Supervisor for the Women's Department of COGIC, students at Page were exposed to a basic curriculum and received a strong dose of character training. During the school's history, the students and faculty endured many hardships, including several devastating fires. Ultimately Page

⁵² Charles Edwin Jones, *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionist and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements* (Motuchen:1987), 210-214.

⁵³ Karen Kossie-Chernychev, "Constructing Good Success: The Church of God in Christ in East Texas". 52. See also Glenda Goodson, "Emma F. Barron—Pioneer COGIC Educator", Paper Presented to COGIC Scholars Fellowship, Auxiliaries in Ministries Summer Convention, St. Louis, MO, July 2001.

did not survive because funds were being diverted to “senior schools” that included both Saints and a COGIC school in Geridge, Arkansas.⁵⁴

The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW) founded a Bible college in the 1940s. The explicit purpose of the school was the training of religious workers. Aenon founders, Karl Smith and LaBaugh Hugh proposed the idea of a Bible college to leaders of PAW in 1940. Both had attended Payne Theological Seminary, though only Stanbury had graduated from Payne. With the blessing of the national assembly, the first classes were held in January of 1941, and twelve students were enrolled. At first, only an eight-week curriculum was offered, but, soon thereafter, it developed into a two-year course of study. Eventually, a four-year Bachelor of Theology and a Bachelor of Religious Education were added. The Correspondence Studies program was established fairly early on in the school’s history and was an indispensable part of the school.⁵⁵

Aenon survived a devastating fire and other challenges along the way, but ultimately the school never achieved accreditation or became a stable feature of the PAW life. The lone chronicler of Aenon, the son of founder Karl Smith, has a less-than-favorable opinion about the persons charged with keeping Aenon alive. Aaron Smith attributes the demise of the school to a lack of funding, inadequate staffing, and ambivalence on the part of the leadership. When Karl Smith died in 1972, so did the energy around Aenon. Still, the school managed to make some

⁵⁴ Pleas, 41.

⁵⁵ Aaron J. Smith, *Aenon Bible College Story* (Self-published, 1997).

significant gains in the post-Smith era. In 1974, Aenon was approved by the Ohio Department of Education to train military veterans. However, Aenon fared poorly during periods of leadership transition. The election of new leaders often meant the adoption of a new vision for the school. The oscillations in policy were too great for the small school to endure. In the 1980's officials in the PAW planned to move Aenon to Indianapolis, closer to the denomination's headquarters, but the plans fell through.

Scattered references suggest there were many more black Pentecostal schools about which we know little. In his 1975 dissertation, sociologist James Shopshire takes notice of educational activities of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith (COOLJC). Shopshire notes that the denomination "currently encourages and supports nearly fifty young persons in institutions of higher education such as Pierre Junior College, Drexel University, Temple University and other schools in the United States."⁵⁶ These efforts were "done in addition to their school named Apostolic Institute, which reportedly places a great emphasis on language studies."⁵⁷ Most recently, the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ opened W. L. Bonner College in 1995. The Home Nursing/Nutrition and Apostolic Doctrine were among the course offerings for the first class of Bonner students.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Shopshire, 100.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Brochure of Refuge Temple Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith*, Date Unknown.

Shopshire also highlights the efforts of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A., which “worked against difficult situations to provide dormitories at its school named Christ’s Missionary and Industrial College in Jackson, MS.” Again, these scant references tell us that black Pentecostals pioneered a wide variety of schools.

African-American Churches and Schools in America before the Twentieth Century

The scholastic endeavors of black Pentecostals are part of a long-established tradition of self-education among African-Americans. Despite their limited access to education, enslaved African-Americans understood education as the key to their success. Denied access to schools and prohibited by law from learning to read, they coveted literacy for a variety of reasons: learning to read and write would enable them to have greater opportunities to protest their oppression, to serve as mediators for illiterate others, and to increase their knowledge of the Bible. Often prompted by their desire to read and understand the sacred text, many slaves took advantage of the limited learning opportunities available to them, with or without the assistance of benevolent whites.⁵⁹ Emancipation brought with it increased educational opportunities and marked the beginning of a movement for mass literacy that was driven by educationally deprived ex-slaves themselves. Educational historian James Anderson has

⁵⁹ Thomas L. Webber, *Deep Like Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865*(New York: W W Norton Company, Inc 1978).

argued that freed slaves served as the main proponents of large-scale educational reforms after the Civil War. Ex-slaves led the charge for self-education throughout the American South. Debunking the myth that universal education was driven primarily by Northern groups, Anderson argues:

Before the northern benevolent societies entered the South in 1862, before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and before Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedman's Bureau) in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of their illiterates.⁶⁰

Black Americans filled the schools that were available to them and started a few of their own. Black-run schools sprang up around the South, often led by ex-slaves who had little education themselves. Early educators faced opposition from Southern whites who feared that an educated underclass could overturn the social hierarchy established during the slavery period. Nevertheless, early black educators persisted in their efforts, determined to reach full social, economic, and political emancipation.

Free blacks worked alongside organizations religious and secular to achieve their educational aims. Proponents of African-American literacy included Northern missionaries and organizations such as the American Missionary Association (est. 1861), the American Baptist Home Mission Society

⁶⁰ James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 7.

(est. 1832), the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society (est. 1866), and several large funding agencies. All of these groups supported a variety of African-American educational endeavors for different reasons. The American Missionary Association helped establish schools including Berea College, Fisk University, Howard University, and Hampton Institute, the last of which would become a model for industrial education. Like the AMA, the American Baptist Home Mission Society had a hand in the founding of several schools for black Americans, including Shaw University (est. 1865 in Raleigh, NC), Virginia Union University (est. 1899 in Richmond, VA), Benedict College (est. 1870 in Columbia, SC), Morehouse College (est. 1868 in Atlanta, GA) and Spelman College (est. 1881 in Atlanta, GA).

With the emergence of the Peabody Fund (1867), the John F. Slater Fund (1882), the General Education Board (1902), the Anna T. Jeanes Fund (1907), and the Rosenwald Fund (1917), many of the above-mentioned colleges received money to remain open. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists supported their share of schools as well. Almost all of the educational groups, secular and religious, claimed some investment in the Christian mission as a motive for their efforts. Many of these groups held less-than-glowing opinions of the people they served. While they may have been motivated by the belief that reading the Bible was essential for effective Christianization, in some cases a dangerous paternalism colored their efforts.

In addition to Northern white philanthropists, independent black churches and historic denominations founded primary and secondary schools.

Black churches, the heart and soul of black communities, played an indispensable role in promoting literacy. Independent black churches were organized before the end of slavery but grew significantly in number after Emancipation. The African Methodist Episcopal Church organized as early as 1816 and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1821. The establishment of the African American Baptists and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (1870) Associations followed. Black Pentecostal groups—the Church of God in Christ (1907) and Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (1912)—organized after the turn of the century.

Black churches formed the core of black educational philanthropy in the South. First, they helped provide the tangible resources to facilitate learning. With limited economic resources, they created schools in makeshift classrooms, with or without Northern benefactors, sometimes run by teachers with little formal training. In poorer communities, black church-run schools were the only schools available. Before (and after) universal education was put into place in 1870, church-run schools filled the void. Some of the church-run schools became colleges. Well-known Spelman College got its start in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta. Wilberforce University (1865) and Morris Brown College (1881) were both supported by the AME Church. The AME Zion Church established Livingstone College in 1879.

Black churches trained armies of educational missionaries, many of whom were black women, to “dig out” schools where they were needed most—the rural American South. In the post-Civil War South, public education was poorly

funded, with few funds allocated for the education of African-American students. Rural schools struggled to stay afloat partly because teachers educated in the North were reluctant to serve as teachers in the undeveloped, rural South. Without regular support, schools in impoverished areas struggled to recruit competent teachers and, ultimately, to keep their doors open. Black educational missionaries settled in undeveloped areas throughout the South to run, build, and sustain schools. Black churches and missionaries joined with benevolent societies (missionary philanthropy) and large corporate philanthropic foundations (industrial philanthropy) in their efforts to spread the gospel of literacy.⁶¹

The schools established throughout the South took on the missions of their benefactors. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham notes how Northern missionary societies encouraged women to channel their missionary zeal in the South. The ABHMS was committed to the education of women but promoted an educational agenda that was biased. The organization sought to create a cadre of women, a “female talented tenth,” who would embrace and spread middle-class values and the “politics of respectability.”⁶² In the case of Spelman College, white missionaries encouraged early Spelman women to adopt a more “refined” religious orientation and to dismiss the expressive religion many of them grew

⁶¹ Anderson, 239.

⁶² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1993), 14-15; 19-46.

up with. Students in the missionary program were encouraged to reach out to the illiterate masses “to impart to the poor and uneducated blacks knowledge of the Bible, personal hygiene, temperance, family and household duties, and habits of punctuality, thrift and hard work.”⁶³

Similarly, at the Hampton Institute, students were taught to work in the field and how to care for their homes. Most famously, Booker T. Washington, a proponent of industrial education for the masses, founded Tuskegee Institute and attracted many supporters. By contrast, proponents of “classical education” believed in a liberal arts-centered education where students could gain exposure to philosophy and European literature.

Survival of the Fittest

Black boarding schools were a regular feature of black Southern life, though their futures were rarely guaranteed. Many of the most successful black schools in the South, vulnerable to changes in the economic and social climate, eventually closed. The case of Palmer Memorial Institute illustrates this point. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, born in North Carolina and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, came to rural Sedalia, North Carolina, in 1901 at the invitation of the American Missionary Association and helped transform the dilapidated Bethany Institute into one of the finest private schools for African-American

⁶³ Higginbotham, 35.

children in the nation.⁶⁴ Educated in New England and influenced by the racial uplift ideology espoused by renowned educator Booker T. Washington, Brown married liberal educational values to industrial educational values, uncharacteristically incorporating foreign languages into her basic curriculum while teaching typical industrial education courses. Brown successfully earned the confidence and respect of powerful Northern white philanthropists for her work at Palmer and utilized her Boston connections to entice benefactors for the school. Because secure funding oscillated from year to year, Brown was forced to think creatively about ways to fundraise and proved to be effective at the task, attracting millions of dollars to Palmer. During Brown's tenure, the Palmer campus expanded significantly and produced several hundred graduates who went on to college.

The highly successful Palmer Institute closed its doors in 1971 amidst financial difficulty and a devastating fire that destroyed one of the school's central buildings.

Black Boarding Schools in Mississippi

In the Jim Crow South, African-American education was constantly under assault. Racism severely limited educational opportunities for black children. In Mississippi, the widespread embrace of white supremacy was particularly vicious. White Mississippians' unwillingness to adequately fund black education

⁶⁴ Charles Wadelington, *Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Palmer Memorial Institute* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

effectively crippled the black public school system, leaving black children underserved and grossly neglected. Writing about blacks in the Mississippi educational system, historian Neil McMillen paints a rather grim picture:

[In] more conventional terms—measured by such tangibles as facilities and equipment, length of the school calendar, curriculum, teacher salaries and training, student-teacher ratios, average daily attendance and pupil “survival rates”—the state’s black children had few of the advantages associated with the quality in education. By virtually every objective measure, they were the nation’s most deprived people.⁶⁵

According to McMillen, the impact of the dual education system imposed by the state was even worse for rural blacks. Because of the lack of adequate public schools, few of the instructors in the rural schools had training beyond the eighth grade, and black schools that did receive state funds were forced to supplement the meager funds they received. In the place of adequate public schools, private and denominationally affiliated schools filled the gap.

The majority of the schools in the rural South embraced education that emphasized the industrial arts. This was due in large part because the funding sources for such institutions privileged such training. Debates about the merits of industrial vs. liberal arts education for African-Americans were public and ongoing in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Harvard-trained sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois advocated strongly for the liberal arts, and

⁶⁵ Neil McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 83.

industrialist Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute, advocated equally strongly for the industrial arts.⁶⁶ Though history often portrays the paradigms of Du Bois and Washington as diametrically opposed, they can be perceived as being complementary if we understand that Du Bois was arguing for the training of the “talented tenth” that would be critical for social change, while Washington was arguing on behalf of the masses who would benefit more from a lesson in broom making than in Latin.

In the American South, it was clear which model prevailed. Washington’s message resonated with Northern industrialists and black educational entrepreneurs eager to work in the South. Tuskegee Institute (est. 1881) set the standard in industrial education that hundreds of black schools strived to emulate. Independent schools such as Utica Institute (1903), Prentiss Institute (1907), and Piney Woods Country Life School (1909) became the most popular proponents of industrial education in Mississippi.⁶⁷ The schools shared in common a connection to Booker T. Washington’s famed Tuskegee Institute. Utica’s founder, William Holtzclaw, had attended Tuskegee, and Bertha Johnson, the wife of Prentiss Institute founder, J. E. Johnson, was also a

⁶⁶ Jan Miller, "Annotated Bibliography of the Washington-Dubois Controversy " *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 2 (1994).

⁶⁷ For more on Piney Woods Country Life School see Laurence C. Jones, *Piney Woods and Its Story*(New York: Fleming H, Revell Company, 1922); Leslie Harper Purcell, *Miracle in Mississippi: Laurence C. Jones of Piney Woods*(New York: Comet Press Books, 1956). See also William H. Holtzclaw, *The Black Man's Burden*(New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1915).

graduate of this prestigious school.⁶⁸ Piney Woods' founder, Laurence Jones, came to Mississippi by way of Iowa, inspired by his study of the Tuskegee model. Though the schools were located in different parts of the state and were founded under different circumstances, there are remarkable similarities in their origin stories and in the challenges they faced. Above all, what the schools founders' shared in common was a commitment to an ideology of racial uplift via industrial arts education.⁶⁹

Conclusions

Black Pentecostals pursued a range of educational paths that were charted to help them better engage the secular world, not to isolate them from it. The example of Bible Way founder Smallwood Williams is instructive. Williams advocated education that sharpened one's critical thinking skills while he also championed theological training. Charles Mason rejected certain critical

⁶⁸ Utica Institute became Utica Junior College in 1952 and eventually merged with Hinds Junior College in 1982. Today it is known as Hinds Community College. For more about Utica see Janet A. Guyden, "Two-Year Historically Black Colleges," in *Two-Year Colleges for Women and Minorities*, ed. Barbara Townsend (New York: Falmer Press 1999).

⁶⁹ For critiques of racial uplift ideology see Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Gaines argues the uplift ideology as practiced by black elites who came from the north to labor the American South was laden with judgmental bourgeois, middle class values. He charges that the values that black elites visited on their southern brothers and sisters were problematic and only served to replicate "even as they contested, the uniquely American racial fictions upon which liberal conceptions of social reality and equality were founded."

readings of the Bible he encountered, but this did not lead to a wholesale rejection of the liberal arts. The schools black Pentecostals founded themselves were places where Holiness-Pentecostal values would be promoted and celebrated. When they did attend schools where they were in the minority, they often worked to preserve these values by creating spiritual support systems.

Compared to Baptists and Methodists, black Pentecostals collectively had fewer resources, experience, and organization when it came to establishing educational institutions of their own. Nevertheless, they ventured into these waters, either out of worldly innocence or blind faith. Along the way some created new models of Pentecostal education that have rarely been duplicated.

CHAPTER TWO

“Walk in Dignity, Talk in Dignity, Live in Dignity”

For over sixty years Saints Industrial and Literary School (later Saints Junior College and Academy) provided academic, social and religious support for students from across the country. In its earliest stages, school officials stressed the fundamentals of education to prepare students for the segregated workforce. The school’s academic rigor was at its height during these years; instruction was both targeted and intense. Though the educational environment was imbued with religious instruction, the educators’ desire to promote the Holiness-Pentecostal way of life was held in balance with their commitment to high-quality education. Beyond the academic sphere, the school held special social and religious significance for COGIC as a denomination. Before COGIC had a seminary, Saints took on the important task of training future leaders of the church. School officials identified students who had potential (regardless of their gender) and granted them opportunities to exercise their gifts. As a result, Saints produced a generous number of future clergy and church workers who went on to serve faith communities in and outside of COGIC. Socially, the school introduced students to COGIC culture and showed them how to behave in ways that were consistent with Holiness-Pentecostal teachings. Students who attended were baptized in the social morays of Holiness-Pentecostal culture. Many became enthusiastic ambassadors for the tradition when they left.

Racial integration of schools post-1954 brought with it a decline in the resources for predominantly African American, privately supported schools like Saints. In the post-integration years, Saints became more preoccupied with its religious mission as other schools, including more established black boarding schools and newly integrated college and universities, filled the academic gap. In Saints' declining years, academics took a back seat to the school's social mission. These changes are reflected in interviews of former students. Students who attended in the 1960s and 1970s were more likely to choose the school out of denominational pride or out of a desire for "character education" than out of a belief that the school would prepare them academically.

Saints graduates' lives are as diverse as their life stories. Whether they chose to join the military, marry, or continue their educations, the lessons they learned at Saints were never far from their memories. Each in his or her own way embodied the school's motto to "Walk in Dignity, Talk in Dignity, and Live in Dignity."

Origins

Saints' histories identify Pinkie Duncan as the inspiration for the school. Duncan and the school's first principal, James Courts, did not have any formal ties to Tuskegee, as did many of the similarly structured schools I describe in the previous chapter. Saints began with Duncan's desire to address the literacy needs of impoverished sharecroppers' children in Lexington, Mississippi. As legend has it, COGIC founder Charles Harrison Mason observed Duncan teaching a small

group of students under deplorable conditions and offered her the opportunity to conduct her classes in the basement of St. Paul Church of God in Christ instead. Duncan's efforts and vision would later be officially adopted by a group of local COGIC elders, who conceived of the idea of building a more permanent school for the "saints" in 1917. An Educational Board was set up to organize the school.

Charles Pleas makes the vision of the board clear:

The Church of God in Christ, by that time, had made such rapid strides in its growth that it became necessary and paramount that something should be done for the education of its youth, under the influence and guidance of instructors and tutors who had either accepted holiness or were willing to serve in a school under the supervision of those of that faith. The brethren of the state felt that by doing so their children would grow up with the proper attitude in human relationships.⁷⁰

The Mississippi elders recruited school administrators, teachers, and other interested church workers to create an ideal educational environment for the saints' children.

The efforts of Duncan, Courts, Mississippi clergy, and congregations would carry the school into the next decade. The arrival of Illinois native Arenia Mallory in 1926 changed the course of the school's history. Mallory would have the most influence on the school's development. This lifelong educator significantly expanded the school's infrastructure, increased its visibility outside of Mississippi, and increased enrollment. Born in Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1904

⁷⁰ Pleas, 47.

to a family of musicians and merchants and educated at the Whipple Academy of Music, Mallory had enjoyed a privileged upbringing. Her father, Frank Mallory, owned a store in Illinois before his death during Arenia's senior year of high school. Mallory's brother Frank flew planes for recreation, a hobby reserved for those with means. In addition to working in the family business, the Mallory men formed a band that gained a national reputation and provided extra income. Arenia's brother Eddie married the blues singer Ethel Waters in the 1940s, further solidifying the family's position in the black middle class.

Accounts differ as to how Mallory came to Lexington, Mississippi and what role she was recruited to play there. Some claim that COGIC founder Charles Mason heard the exceptionally talented musician at a revival in St. Louis in 1926 and approached her about leading the new school.⁷¹ Others testify that a group of missionaries who had accompanied Mason to the revival solicited Mallory to become a music teacher at Saints.⁷² Narrators agree that she had intended to become a missionary in Africa before her recruiter(s) persuaded her that there was a "Little Africa" in Mississippi. She came to Lexington instead of fulfilling her mother's wish that she become a concert pianist or her own aspirations to work overseas as a missionary.

Service had been an important part of Mallory's upbringing. As a teenager, she dedicated herself to social service work, initiating a reading program for

⁷¹ Pleas, 49.

⁷² Simmons and Martin, *Down Behind the Sun: the Story of Arenia Mallory* (Self-Published, 1983), 11.

disadvantaged girls and working as a recreational director at a Baptist-run orphanage in Chicago, Illinois. According to Mallory's biographers the conditions she found in Lexington were appalling:

The toilets for the boys and girls were quite a distance from the building—so far that the boys' toilet was called Memphis and the girls' toilet was called Durant. . . A hand pump and spring water were the water system; wood was cut from the trees; iron stoves were the heating system. Food was scarce; the classroom where seven grades of work were taught was poorly equipped.⁷³

Within weeks after Mallory's arrival at the undeveloped Saints campus, James Courts died and Mallory took charge of the day-to-day operations of the school.

Financing Saints

Saints-housed students lived in dormitories during the school year. The majority of students who attended could not afford to pay the modest tuition, putting a financial strain on the institution.⁷⁴ Even St. Paul, the school's parent church, was unable to help, since it was dealing with its own debt.⁷⁵ Local Mississippi COGIC clergy had always played a vital role in financially supporting Saints. Early on, Stephen Rice, Overseer of the State of Mississippi, assisted

⁷³ Simmons and Martin, 14.

⁷⁴ In 1954 the tuition for primary, elementary, and junior/high school students was a modest \$.25, \$.50 and \$1.00 per month respectively. See "Facts About Saints Junior College," (Lexington circa 1954).

⁷⁵ Charles H. Wilson, *Education for Negroes in Mississippi since 1910* (Boston Meador Publishing Company 1947), 95.

James Courts in raising money for the purchase of forty acres for the first campus.

Finding adequate funding was an ongoing problem for African-American schools in the rural South; their local communities could rarely afford to sustain them. One tried-and-true way that many small rural schools recruited potential benefactors was by nurturing strong music departments and choirs; indeed, the tradition of using musical departments to conduct funding campaigns was as old as Fisk University. The Nearby Piney Woods Country Life School had at least four musical groups that traveled extensively to supplement the funds that Jones raised: The Cotton Blossom Singers, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm (jazz band), the Rays of Rhythm, and the Glee Club. Piney Woods also benefited from a brief relationship with the Rosenwald Fund. However, it was Jones's appearance on the popular television show *This is Your Life* in 1954 that marked a major turning point for the financial life of the school. When television host Ralph Edwards surprised Dr. Jones with friends, families, and supporters who raved about his work in Mississippi, donations poured in from ordinary citizens, corporations, and other interested parties. These funds established a million-dollar Piney Woods endowment.⁷⁶

Like Piney Woods, Saints also looked to its musical department for help with fundraising. Under the direction of Eula Mae Lashley, Saints' Jubilee Harmonizers crisscrossed the country on numerous fundraising campaigns. The

⁷⁶ Purcell, 231.

small ensemble would gain a national reputation for its distinctive and “pure” black Holiness sound. It made the rounds from California to New York, attracting both prospective students and investors to the small institution. Internationally acclaimed blues singer, Broadway star, and Academy Award-nominated entertainer Ethel Waters (1896–1977) reflected fondly on the talent of the young girls in the Jubilee Singers in her autobiography, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*:

When the girls sang there was nothing between them and their God. There was nothing to stop their voices, rich and full of heart, from reaching him. These were voices untampered with, and they were raised in song not to impress people or to earn money. They were singing to express something they felt and that they never could say in words if they went to all the Vassars and Howard Universities on earth.⁷⁷

On the strength of Waters’ recommendation, the girls would sing in a production of *Mamba’s Daughters* on Broadway. Earning a salary of \$40 a week, each would dutifully send a portion of her earnings to her parents back in Lexington.⁷⁸ Before their Broadway success, the Harmonizers sang at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York in 1931, and reaped a generous sum of \$8,000 for their rendition of “In My Savior’s Care” in the midst of the Great Depression. The success at the Harlem church earned the group an invitation to

⁷⁷ Ethel Waters and Charles Samuels, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*(Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc. , 1951), 231.

⁷⁸ Waters, 246.

Riverside Church. The money raised on the tour built Faith Hall, the first brick building on campus. On September 25, 1938, the group sang for President and Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House.⁷⁹

As effective as Saints' music tours were, the money they raised was barely enough to keep Saints going. Like her counterparts at other black schools, Mallory had to generate new tactics for raising money as the climate for industrial education fundraising grew cold in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Though industrialists and philanthropists provided support for industrial education in the late nineteenth century, would-be funders had turned their attention elsewhere by 1915:

Not the least of their problems derived from the fact that the Progressive Era witnessed an increasing public awareness of social injustice. Thus black industrial educators had to compete with numerous other solicitors who, for example, sought the philanthropists' dollars to finance reform efforts against municipal corruption and for vice elimination, temperance crusades, and settlement houses. In addition, they were hamstrung by the relative affluence of a few schools like Hampton and Tuskegee which had given the philanthropic north the false impression that most, if not all, black industrial schools in the South were well cared for.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Elsie K. Kirk, *Music at the White House: A History of the American Spirit* (Urbana and Chicago University of Illinois Press 1986), 111.

⁸⁰ Henry Enck, "Black Self Help in the Progressive Era: The 'Northern Campaigns' of Smaller Southern Black Industrial Schools, 1900-1915," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan 1976), 73-87.

Mallory lectured at churches and at secular organizations, hoping to receive sizeable voluntary donations for the school's ambitious programs. She embarked on long-distance fundraising tours and letter writing campaigns to solicit new supporters.

The tactics Mallory employed to garner financial resources were similar to those employed by her contemporaries, but Saints faced greater challenges than did more established black colleges. With a longer history and list of potential funders, such institutions had more success in attracting benefactors. To make their efforts more efficient, a group of black college presidents organized the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) in the 1940s. Led by Frederick Patterson, president of Tuskegee University, a small group of black college presidents agreed to combine their funding campaigns. Their experiment paid off; UNCF won millionaire investors.⁸¹

Gendered Networks

Smaller black boarding schools had a much harder path. Well aware of the deficit she faced and the benefits of a well-publicized educational program, Mallory forged as many relationships as she could with prominent members in the African-American community who could bring attention to Saints. In a letter to Claude Barnett, the president of the Associated Negro Press, Mallory solicits help in publicizing Saints:

⁸¹ Marybeth Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges: A History of the United Negro College Fund* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 33-68.

My Dear Mr. Barnett,

[...] I have been very anxious to discuss with you a plan whereby our little school could receive the type of publicity, over a period of time, that would acquaint every section of the country, with the work we are doing here [...] Of course, in comparison with Tuskegee or Fisk, it is still very, very small. But the type of service that we are reaching, plus the spiritual morale of the school, makes it a very big concern . . . I have worked for years with the State Department Officials and we at last have free textbooks for every Negro high school. The situation grows more bitter . . . but I am unafraid and determined that I shall represent the forgotten, and down trodden, rural Negro, as long as God gives me breath.⁸²

The bulk of Saints' operating costs came from private fundraising, and it was women who undergirded these efforts. It is hard to overestimate the importance of women to Saints' day-to-day operations. Women kept the campus alive. Cognizant of COGIC's pool of female talent, Mallory often tapped the denomination's Women Department for its financial and human resources. Lillian Brooks Coffey, Supervisor of the Women's Department from 1945 to 1964, was a strategic partner in Mallory's efforts to bring attention and money to Saints. After a devastating fire that destroyed the boys' living quarters in April 1950, Coffey, known for her organizing ability, was dispatched by the General Assembly to Lexington to "set forth a program by which to raise money to build

⁸² Mallory-Barnett correspondence, Feb. 13, 1942, The Mary McLeod Bethune Papers at the National Council of Negro Women Archive, Washington, D.C.

the dormitory.”⁸³ It was at Coffey’s suggestion that the National Church dedicated the Children’s Day of its annual National Convocation to raising money exclusively for the educational divisions of the church. Coffey argued that designating an official Educational Night would reduce and/or eliminate the frequent emergency appeals for money at the General Assembly meetings. Additionally, Coffey authorized the Women’s Department to pay \$100 per month to supplement Mallory’s modest salary during the academic year and to provide her entire salary in the summer months. When the campus farm was unproductive, the Women’s Department lent money to cover the shortfall. Women were not only critical to the operation of the school, but literally helped build the campus. By the 1950s, three of the major buildings on campus had been erected or renovated by funds provided by the Women’s Executive Ways and Means Board. Two of the buildings, Eula Sims Hall and Lizzie Robinson Hall, were named in public appreciation and acknowledgement of women’s contributions.

Outside of COGIC, Mallory drew on her relationship with Mary McLeod Bethune for support. Bethune was a nationally renowned, Washington-savvy educator who became known for her work with the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). She founded Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida in 1904. Often hailed as the female Booker T. Washington of her day,

⁸³ A. Z. Hall and Keith Dill, eds., *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ, 1934-1960* (Memphis: Church of God in Christ, 2001), April 5, 1950.

Bethune commanded attention from local, national, and international audiences. She would become one of Mallory's role models and most cherished confidants. Commenting on the relations between Mallory and Bethune, Butler speculates that a common "belief that sanctification empowered them spiritually for service [and] perhaps provided a basis of their friendship."⁸⁴ Letters exchanged between the two college presidents in the 1940s and 1950s point to an even closer relationship. In the Bethune-Mallory correspondence, the leaders traded encouraging words, monetary contributions, personal stories, and more. They shared their hopes, dreams and fears for their respective institutions. In one letter, Mallory affectionately referred to the senior Bethune as "the one who I love next to my mother."⁸⁵ In turn, Bethune often addressed letters to her "daughter," Arenia.

Common life experiences also drew the women together. Both Mallory and Bethune boasted a robust religious faith, built and served as presidents of schools in the rural South, and encountered innumerable obstacles to their humanitarian efforts due to their gender. As Bethune says in a letter to her young protégée, "Your life has been so intertwined around mine—our thoughts—our aspirations have been so similar."⁸⁶ In Bethune, Mallory found a staunch ally, mentor, and friend. Mallory felt deeply indebted to Bethune and credited

⁸⁴ Butler, 110.

⁸⁵ Bethune-Mallory correspondence, May 24, 1948.

⁸⁶ Bethune-Mallory correspondence, December 1950.

her fictive mother with her decision to pursue a Masters degree. She endured a grueling commute to earn her advanced degree from the University of Massachusetts, and rejoiced in an upbeat letter to her friend, mentor, and fictive mother that she had managed to maintain an “A” average while executing her responsibilities in Lexington.⁸⁷

At times Mallory admitted her exhaustion with the “hostile” Mississippi environment. In a letter dated May 24, 1948, she confesses, “Sometimes I feel a tremendous urge to do something different.” On one occasion, she asked Bethune if she had work for her in Florida or could recommend a job in higher education administration that would be less taxing. In return, Bethune offered Mallory blessings, affirmation, and praise. As a well-seasoned president, Bethune remained optimistic and encouraging, pushing Mallory to stay the course and finish the work she had started. As a sign of her admiration for her Lexington counterpart, Bethune bestowed Mallory with an honorary doctorate from Bethune-Cookman College in 1950.

Bethune’s influence on Mallory’s career was immeasurable. She recommended the Lexington leader for top positions, lent her own name to Mallory’s fundraising purposes, and provided wise counsel. Mallory’s friendship with Bethune strengthened Saints’ networks of support; increased exposure for Mallory meant increased visibility for Saints and consequently for its bank account. Mallory turned to gendered networks, headed by Coffey and Bethune,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

because they had proven time and time again that they understood her challenges and were willing to regularly offer assistance to keep the school open.

Life at Saints

I collected twelve interviews with former Saints students and administrators. The oldest participant was a graduate of the Class of 1946. The youngest graduated from high school in 1980. The majority hailed from Southern states and had generational ties to COGIC. Collectively these insider perspectives provide a thick description of life at a black Pentecostal school. Their accounts give support to my claim that Saints was a multipurpose institution. In addition to preparing students to compete academically, students perceived that officials were deeply concerned with their holistic needs and implemented programs and activities that would speak to their hearts, minds, and souls.

Regimen

No matter when they attended, students spoke of the strict daily regimen they were obliged to follow while at Saints. Teachers used farm work as one way to instill discipline. For decades, students were expected to raise crops to eat and sell. The experience taught students about the value of hard work and respect for the land. Moreover, the money raised from the sale of the food grown was critical for the school's fragile economy, while crops raised for consumption reduced food costs. A 1950 report cited sweet potatoes, peas, cotton, corn and syrup among the school's staple crops.

Born and raised in Lexington in the 1920s, Jerry Pickett was no stranger to hard agricultural work. Then, as now, most of the town's inhabitants relied on agriculture to make a living. Like many of the students from the first classes at Saints, Pickett and his family were members of the "mother church," St. Paul Church of God in Christ. They operated a small farm about seven miles from the church.

Pickett first enrolled in Saints Industrial for elementary school, but when times got hard and his parents couldn't afford the modest fee, he enrolled in the local "country school" until the eighth grade.⁸⁸ He resumed his studies at Saints in the ninth grade. Unable to afford the dormitory fees, Pickett often walked the seven miles to the Saints campus. On the days when he rode his mule there, his father arranged for him to leave the mule at a house nearby. What Pickett remembered most about his time at Saints was the high standards the school's leaders set for the students. He grew up during a time when teachers reigned supreme and students feared discipline. The principal, Eula Sims, and the president, Dr. Mallory, made a big impression on Pickett. These women were disciplinarians who imposed harsh consequences for those who didn't follow the rules:

It was good. It was good because you didn't fool around in my day when you went to school. What I mean about that is if you did something wrong, you had to try to keep your grades up. If you did something wrong that

⁸⁸ The main difference, according to Pickett, was that the country school would operate from October to April and Saints would run from September through June.

principal [Eula Sims] and that president Mallory . . . would take you in a room like this . . . and they would whoop you. They didn't fool around. . . . It sounds bad but that's what it takes. We didn't have no foolishness at Saints Industrial at that time.

The no-nonsense attitude didn't darken Pickett's experience of Saints. He believed that the heavy hand of discipline was necessary to produce quality students and to instill respect in students for those in authority.

Nearly thirty years later in 1970, Regina Goodrich endured a similar dose of discipline. Having arrived at age thirteen, she nearly left in the first semester because of the rigors of the daily routine. Goodrich recalls following a tight schedule in which even "free" time was regulated:

At 6:00 a.m. you got up with someone who was one of the monitors singing "Whisper a Prayer" in the morning. . . And then after we would pray, we would get up, take our showers, make our beds, and then the underclassmen would line up. We wore blue and white. And we would line up and we would go to the cafeteria. We would have breakfast. We would come back and finish what we would be doing and then we would get in a line again and go to our classes. And then we would have lunch. . . .then you would have some free time or the chapel was open and you could go in the chapel for prayer...

Remarkably, Nathaniel Stampley, who attended Saints Academy 1967–1969 and the junior college division 1970–1972, also recounted a day-to-day routine that had been indelibly impressed upon his memory. Since he was used to waking up for 6:00 a.m. family prayer back in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the school's early morning wake-up call was no problem. Stampley recalled that all the boys had

the special responsibility of taking turns to ring the community bell, while he himself was in charge of noon-day prayers. Stampley remembered that religious practices were built into the academic day:

And then during the noon hour...I would always facilitate a noon prayer for about 30 minutes because we had to eat and then go back to classes. Every evening at the end of the school—it was mandatory—I think it was 3:45 p.m. we would have an end of the day prayer. Then every evening at the close of the night we would also have a prayer in each dormitory. We had a Tuesday night worship, a Wednesday night Bible study (and Dr. Mallory called it Confessional Night.) If you'd done wrong, you stood up and confessed. We also had Friday night worship. Then we had Sunday morning worship...We would go to St. Paul mother church, the church that Mason founded.

The strict regulation of students' comings and goings and the management of their religious lives may have been Saints' way of protecting them from the harsh realities of segregated Mississippi life. School uniforms also helped to shield Saints students, setting them apart from the locals and commanding a level of respect. The girls wore blouses (or "middies") and skirts, while the boys were required to wear ties. White Lexington residents expected a certain behavior from Saints students, and because of this Pickett says they didn't give students any trouble:

[The] other race thought Saints Industrial School was good for the blacks and they would get behind and kind of push it. . . . You could go in town to get something and if you [told] them you were from Saints Industrial they would let you come.

Academics

In its early years Saints had exceptional resources compared to other schools in its class. One observer noted that Saints' science laboratory was among "one of the best in the state."⁸⁹ Chalmers Archer, a native of Lexington, remembered that Saints had one of the best-equipped libraries for African American students.⁹⁰ One indication that Saints administrators were concerned about academic excellence was their relentless pursuit and maintenance of annual state accreditation from the Mississippi Department of Education. A 1946 brochure boasted that the school had received the state's highest rating:

In 1936 the High School of Saints Industrial and Literary School had the distinction of being one of the first schools for Negro students in Mississippi to be fully accredited by the State Department of Education. This indicates the general quality of its work is such as to warrant the admission of its graduates to any recognized school of Higher Learning.⁹¹

The drive for accreditation often prompted improvement projects. In a financial report to the Board of Trustees dated November 15, 1950, Dr. Mallory reported on the repairs that would be needed to obtain the state's stamp of approval:

⁸⁹ Charles Wilson, *Education for Negroes in Mississippi Since 1910* (Boston: Meador Publishing, 1947), 96.

⁹⁰ Chalmers Archer, *Growing Up Black in Rural Mississippi* (New York: Waller, 1992), 113.

⁹¹ Saints brochure, 1946, p. 3.

The Mississippi Accrediting Commission for both Elementary and High Schools is making greater demands for standard instructional equipment for academic work and it will be necessary for us to purchase greater quantities of both permanent and consumable supplies for this purpose. In a recent survey we found that the electrical installations in Sims and Faith Hall were inadequate for the purposes they are used for and it is recommended that the entire system be reworked in order to give us proper light as requested by the Accrediting Commission.⁹²

Saints' curriculum consisted of the courses that were required for the state's seal of approval. The academic requirements for the high school students in the class of 1944–1945 were as follows:

Grade 9

Required: English Literature, General Science, Elementary Algebra
Electives: Home Economics, Band Instruction, World History

Grade 10

Required: English Literature, French, Biology
Electives: Chorus, Band, American History

Grade 11

Required: Plane Geometry, English Literature, Civics, Sociology
Electives: Chorus, Band, Home Economics, American and Medieval History

Grade 12

Required: English Literature, Chemistry, American Government, Economic Geography
Electives (Choose 2): Chorus, General Mathematics, Home Economics, Advanced Algebra⁹³

⁹² Hall and Dill, eds.

⁹³ "The Saints Industrial and Literary School Bulletin," (Lexington, Mississippi: 1946), 9.

The list of course offerings twenty years later was remarkably similar. This consistency in curriculum was likely due to the administration's adherence to accreditation guidelines. The addition of electives like Business English and Shorthand reflected the changing times. Adjustments were made to accommodate the various careers available to students. For the internationally minded, Spanish and French were available.⁹⁴

With the addition of the junior college in 1954, the curriculum offerings expanded. On the pre-professional track, students could choose among ten courses that included agriculture, home economics, math, social science, art, or business administration. Terminal courses included cosmetology, secretarial training, religious studies, and vocational agriculture. Applicants were admitted to the college based on their high school performance, "personal interviews, evidences of maturity, and testing results indicating probable success."⁹⁵

Religious Life

What distinguished Saints from most of the other rural schools in its class was its emphasis on religious practices. Nearly all of the black boarding schools emphasized Christian values, although not in the same way. Piney Woods, for instance, was decidedly ecumenical. The school had relationships with several Christian groups, including the Lutheran church, the Church of the Brethren, and

⁹⁴ "The Elementary and High School Bulletin ", ed. Saints Academy(Lexington circa 1967).

⁹⁵ "Facts About Saints Junior College," 2.

the Young Men's and Women's Christian Association.⁹⁶ Leslie Purcell wrote about a chapel service she observed at Piney Woods in which a rabbi was invited to give the sermon, a Presbyterian missionary talked about her work in India, and a Catholic student led the student body in song. In Purcell's view, "the policy of giving a varied menu of moral and religious thought seemed a vital part of Dr. Jones' idea of religious education."⁹⁷ Students were taught that a strong work ethic and character were valued religious principles, and modesty was encouraged. Students participated in "marches" instead of "dances" to ensure there would be no inappropriate contact between the male and female students. Piney Woods graduate Ada Adams (1922–24) recalled despairingly that "there was music but no dancing, not even square dancing." She reflected, "I was one of these that had been taught many things were wrong for people to do who had accepted Christ as their personal Savior."⁹⁸ In later years, the school relaxed its prohibitions against dancing but maintained its emphasis on the virtues of hard work, modesty, and a strong character.

A defining feature of Holiness-Pentecostal life is the mandate for believers to be sanctified, or set apart. One student explained that growing up Holiness-Pentecostal was "about presenting yourself in a way that the world might see a difference in you, that when you're walking down the street then people know

⁹⁶ Alferdteen B. Harrison, *Piney Woods School: An Oral History* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1982), 80.

⁹⁷ Purcell, 186.

⁹⁸ Harrison, 78.

that you are of Christ.”⁹⁹ It was important that representatives of the tradition maintained outward demonstrations of their spiritual discipline, such as attending church, fasting, and praying. The experiences of former student Jack Whitehead illustrate the heavy emphasis that school officials placed on cultivating habits of religious practice. Prayer was a central part of the Saints experience, explains Whitehead:

I think it all added up to eleven times a day. That’s how often we prayed. [They] prayed when they first work in their dorms before they left out. They prayed at breakfast. They prayed through their classes. They prayed through afternoon lunch. Then at 2:00 p.m. every day the whole campus would close down . . . and every single living, breathing person would meet in the auditorium for prayer. Then they would pray at dinner. Then pray before they would conclude the evening. . . . And that environment brought people to a place in God where many of them heard their callings for life.¹⁰⁰

School officials maintained a prayer room that was staffed at all times, where students were required to devote at least fifteen minutes a day to private prayer.¹⁰¹ Sacred spaces were commissioned on the campus to encourage spiritual practices. In 1953 the Saints Board of Trustees permitted F. D.

⁹⁹ Interview with Regina Goodrich by Anjulet Tucker, June 23, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Phone interview with Jack Whitehead, interview by Anjulet Tucker, Skype recording, January 29, 2008.

¹⁰¹ Jerry Pickett, interview by Anjulet Tucker, 27, January 2008, Chicago, Illinois,

¹⁰¹ Interview with Jerry Pickett, St Luke Church of God in Christ, Chicago, IL, January 27, 2008.

Washington to build a prayer tower on the campus “for the continual prayer life of the students.” In the early 1970s the O. M. Kelly Chapel became the center of religious life revered by students:

And for us the campus was, during my era, the campus was holy ground. I mean you could feel the power of God coming up through the cracks in the sidewalks. It was just a place that you felt...It’s like the Israelites. It was the cloud by day and the fire by night. It was like cloud hung over in the daytime and the fire was there at night. I mean we had a regimen but it was a regimen of fasting. It was like my whole spiritual life transformed.¹⁰²

Away from their parents, students were expected, not simply to emulate adult role models, but to take charge of their own religious lives. Developing student religious leadership was a priority at Saints. Students ran their own worship services on campus. Jack Whitehead recalls being stunned at the responsibilities students had at the religious services, and becoming stronger in his faith as a result:

It was very different for me because I was used to the adults carrying on and all the young people did was sit and watch them. And when I went into that environment and saw it was the youth who carried on and the adults were sitting back. And the whole entire service was conducted by the student body and that was different. It motivated me to be much bolder in my faith and in my worship.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Goodrich Interview with Author.

¹⁰³ Whitehead Interview with Author.

Goodrich made a similar observation. “I mean what you see with adults in church today is what you would see in our lives there.” She expounds:

We had others who were church mothers...Our church mothers were either freshmen or sophomores in college. And our missionaries were high school students. And so we had deacons. We had every entity that you would find in the “normal church.

After he graduated from the high school division, Nathaniel Stampley became the first Campus Pastor of Saints Junior College and Academy. In this role he served his peers by preaching at chapel services and organizing noon-day prayers:

When I first attended Saints I had only been preaching maybe two months. And Dr. Mallory saw something in me. She said, “Young man Stampley, you are in charge of all the religious activities.” I [was] a young minister. There were college students that were older than me and there were people that I felt had more experience. And she saw something in me. At the time the leader was not called the Campus Pastor. The leader was really called the Prayer Band leader and so she appointed me as the Prayer Band leader. And this really meant I was in charge of all the religious activities for the campus.

According to Goodrich’s testimony there was little discrimination against women who wanted to pursue a life in ministry. Goodrich says she received her call while a student on the campus and she insists that Dr. Mallory was supportive of this in spite of the denomination’s prohibitions against ordaining women.

Leisure

The school environment was structured in such a way as to encourage students to live with integrity in and outside of the classroom. As important as the development of a religious life was, students' holistic needs were not neglected. This is evident in the school's extracurricular offerings. A 1946 Saints brochure listed eleven clubs and organizations in which students could participate. The Student Council, Science Club and Pep Squad were some of the more traditional clubs available. Among some of the more unique clubs were the Hi-Y Boys Club and Girls Purity Class, which encouraged students to pursue careers in social services. Modeled after historically black fraternities and sororities, the Mallory Club helped "develop the social phase of the school." Here students participated in community service activities that targeted the less fortunate. College students had their choice of becoming active on one of the school's athletic teams, the school's publishing club, or in one of the school's many music programs. The Co-Ed Club (founded "to direct the social life of the women of the college") and the Men's Club (providing "social activity and an organized intramural sports program for the men students of the college") offered additional opportunities for socializing.¹⁰⁴ Saints students insist that there were ample opportunities to have fun in spite of the list of strict rules and demanding school schedules.

¹⁰⁴ "Facts About Saints Junior College."

Choosing Saints

Students came to Saints from many different circumstances and for many different reasons. Many COGIC parents selected the school for their children because of its emphasis on holy living. Jerry Pickett says that his parents' decision to send him to Saints had to do with its conscious selection of "saved teachers." Attending rival Lexington Ambrose High School was out of the question for Pickett because it would be like "taking money away from the saints."¹⁰⁵ Cleo Anderson expressed a similar sentiment. "My parents were saints so I had to go there more or less," she reported. Jack Whitehead's mother decided to send her son to the school after having met the school's president. She was convinced her son would develop under Mallory's care. Similarly, according to Neaul Haynes' biographers, the future bishop's parents sent him to Saints because they believed he "had a special calling" that could be unearthed with the "kind of discipline that Saints Industrial School offered."¹⁰⁶

Several students were sent to Saints not by their families, but by spiritual mentors who believed the school would serve them well. Regina Goodrich came to Saints in 1970 after missionaries in her local congregation suggested the school to her. Before she moved to Lexington, Goodrich had never even heard of the school. Because her family did not have long COGIC ties, Goodrich hadn't

¹⁰⁵ Jerry Pickett, Interview with author, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Glenda Goodson and Chris Davis, *The Appropriate Churchman: The Life Story of Bishop J. Neaul Haynes Second Vice President of the Church of God in Christ*(HCM Publishing 2003), 49.

travelled to Memphis for the Convocation, where she would have heard Dr. Mallory's annual recruitment speech. Goodrich became close to her church family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She relied on the word of her spiritual mothers and fathers who had guided her spiritual life while she was a young teenager. She trusted their suggestion to send her to Saints because she firmly believed that they had her best interests at heart:

I knew nothing about the school but I trusted their judgment. I trusted their investment in my life and I trusted it because they loved and cared about me. It wasn't just something we were going to do...Everything was about relationship building. We do a lot of things but we don't necessarily start with building a relationship and you have to have that relationship for people to trust.

While students like Whitehead and Goodrich were sent to Saints, many students made the decision to go on their own. Compelled by the opportunity to commune with other saved youth, to escape their environments, or to participate in the stellar music program, they chose the school on their own. Frederick Moore was impressed by Saints students' presentations at the Memphis Convocation and decided to go there for junior college. Stampley was wooed by the sweet sounds of one of the Saints traveling groups, called the King's Sons:

There was a group called the King's Sons. Dr. Mallory had a group of four men. They would travel about the US singing through the way of promoting the school and generating revenue for the school. They came to Baton Rouge in 1966 and I was a sophomore in High school. And I told my mother I want to go to that school. Of course my mother didn't like that

idea because none of us had gone away to an out of state school. But the more I talked and talked I convinced my parents to let me go.

COGIC parents, students, and COGIC members were not the only ones choosing or recommending Saints. For some local Lexington families, the school offered the best alternative to public education.

Class

The families of Lexington, Mississippi were among some of the most disadvantaged in the state. When blues singer Ethel Waters visited the Saints campus in the early 1940s she was struck by the poor conditions under which Lexington residents lived. Waters noted that many children sacrificed a great deal to attend the small school, often traveling by foot to school each day:

I found out that there were children in the Saints' Industrial School who walked five or six miles each way every day to attend their classes. Some of them who lived even farther out and couldn't get to the school by walking were housed in the dormitories that were built for them. These only went home on the weekends. Their parents were all poor share croppers and they didn't have any money to pay for their kids' lessons. They paid off, instead, with sacks of meal and whatever else they could grow. And this meant food off their table and clothes off their backs.

I was flattened by how deep and intense was the hunger for education in those backwoods children and their parents. But when sharecropping time came, the white farmers who owned the land the Negro families worked on would come to the school in drays to get the kids. The children had to go off and help in the harvesting. And when that was finished the white farmers didn't bother to take the kids back to school. The children had to

get back to Lexington as best they could and they always made it. They made me proud of being a Negro, those children and their ignorant, overworked parents.¹⁰⁷

Waters and her band gave a concert for Saints' families to reward their diligence and hard work.

Water's observations call attention the issues of social class at Saints. Though it was clear that Saints catered to students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, class never emerged organically as a theme in the interviews. When asked about class dynamics, the students I spoke with claimed they hardly noticed class differences at all. Most affirmed Saints as a place where everyone, poor or rich, was welcome. Even though it was an "up" school, as Pickett called it, it accommodated the less fortunate. As one of the "community children," or students who did not board at the school, Pickett says he got along just fine with the students whose parents could afford to have them live on campus.

One student did report however, that Dr. Mallory sometimes intervened in students' social lives by playing matchmaker. Nathaniel Stampley met his wife at Saints. He says Dr. Mallory "influenced" him to marry the woman he firmly believes God intended him to marry. Mallory's role in mate selection may have been her attempt to shape the future leadership of the COGIC national body. It might also be that for Mallory, class and social status were at stake. Anthea Butler

¹⁰⁷ Waters, 230.

has argued that Mallory's encounters with high-profile members of the historically black Greek organization Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in the 1930s ultimately produced changes at Saints. Members of the sorority went to volunteer in underdeveloped Lexington, Mississippi in 1934 after having met Mallory and a group of Saints singers on tour. They partnered with Mallory to implement a summer educational program for Lexington youth. The volunteers taught adult education and literacy courses. After their summer stint, the group shifted their interests to improving health conditions in the Mississippi Delta. Dr. Dorothy Ferebee worked with Mallory to operate a six-week clinic on the Saints campus.¹⁰⁸

According to Butler the AKA volunteer project was a turning point in Saints history. After the project there was increased attention to activities like oratory contests and musical performances. Essentially the campus became more class-conscious. The new student body reflected these changes. Butler argues that Mallory's attention to matchmaking might have been born of this new attention to class and social status:

The student body population would also begin to change as well. Mallory solicited students from the upper echelons of COGIC, establishing a boarding school for the COGIC elites' children. In terms of promoting the

¹⁰⁸ Tom Ward, "Medical Missionaries of the Delta: Dr. Dorothy Ferebee and the Mississippi Health Project, 1935-1941," *Journal of Mississippi History* 63, no. 3 (2001): 190-191.

“fictive family” this was an astute move, as it ensured that the “right” children would meet and marry.¹⁰⁹

Diversity

By the 1950s, Saints had strong representation from non-COGIC students. A 1951 report to the General Assembly of the COGIC National Church revealed that Baptist students made up a little over 40% of the student body, a significant change from the early days. Methodist students comprised less than 10%. The report shows that two Catholic students also attended.¹¹⁰ At first glance, given the school’s unapologetic Pentecostal identity, the presence of non-COGIC, non-Pentecostal students would be curious. But it should hardly be surprising that Saints attracted a wide range of students, as the school’s affordability, academic standing, and positive reputation likely guided their decisions.

The academic environment was further enhanced by the presence of international students. Dr. Mallory’s trip to Liberia in January of 1960 as the guest of President Truman paved the way for an internationally diverse campus. Mallory extended her visit to include a trip to several COGIC mission schools and surveyed the educational infrastructure of the most rural parts of Liberia. The Mississippi educator reported being overwhelmed by the hospitality of the people and felt compelled to help improve the conditions of Liberia’s poorest

¹⁰⁹ Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2007), 108.

¹¹⁰ Hall and Dill, eds., December 1951.

citizens. Upon her return, she organized The Friends to Liberian Youth, an organization that raised money for Liberian students to continue their education in the United States. Provisions were made for ten students from Liberia to attend Saints Junior College with all of their expenses paid.

Institutional Caring

From the 1940s to the 1990s, students' accounts point to Saints' greatest assets: the dedication of its teachers, the hands-on educational philosophy, and the grounding in character education. They describe a school culture that would not accept excuses for failure and pushed them to succeed. Saints officials met students where they were, taking in as many students as possible, regardless of their academic ability. They were determined to mold them into confident and productive citizens of society. Motivated by their faith and/or sense of calling to educate the community, teachers embraced their work as role models.

Students told stories of adults who singled them out for additional academic support or mentoring. For many, Dr. Mallory filled this role:

[Dr. Mallory] would challenge me on—coming from Louisiana—a lazy tongue. I would say DIS and she was say THIS, THESE, THEY. She would just keep me hours upon hours. Other students would be at home resting. I would be out to her house in the wee hours of the morning—sometimes 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 a.m. She's the president. She could sleep as long as she wanted. But I had to get up early the next morning, be at prayer at 6:00 a.m., be at school on time—no excuses. So she saw something in me and she drilled me. Also, I became her chauffer and we had a chance to just

spend many hours. And that's when I really got to know her—when I became her chauffeur.

Aside from his parents, Stampley declared Dr. Mallory to be “the single most important influence” on his life. Dr. Leonard Lovett was profoundly affected by Mallory's mentorship. After attending a Saints rally in Pompano Beach, Florida, as a teenager, Lovett enrolled in Saints' junior college division to study under her watchful eye. As Mallory's driver, he learned much from their time together.

Lovett describes Mallory as an exceptional educator. The experienced teacher singled him out for special attention and groomed him for future success:

She knew every student on the campus and she remembered me specifically because I was destined for seminary so she gave special attention. In fact she worked me beyond the regular. . . . [F]or example I used to work for her sort of my work study program, chauffeuring, I used to do some cleaning and making sure her residence was up to par. But she would occasionally take time to do some French, go over French to make sure. She said, “If you're going to Morehouse you're going to have to step up.” And she was pretty tough on me. Oratorical contest, once I remember she had me standing under a tree memorizing Howard Thurman's “Good News for the Underprivileged.” That's how I became interested in Howard Thurman. I never heard the name until she introduced me to Howard Thurman.

Goodrich remembered Dr. Mallory's penchant for talking to young people and giving them sage advice about how to pursue their life aspirations:

She poured everything that she possibly could in our lives. There were some of us, and we didn't pride it then, that she kind of picked to be close to her. And there would be times that she would call the dormitory and she would call for us. And we would have to get dressed and have to rush over to her trailer. Or she would have her station wagon outside that would bring her to her house before she was living on the campus and we would sit up and Doc would just teach us and talk to us and pour things into us.

Goodrich, today an ordained minister in the Lutheran church, attributes much of her success to Dr. Mallory. She sees her life in the Lutheran church as a fulfillment of a prediction Dr. Mallory made that her students would "cross into all places."

According to education scholar Vanessa Siddle Walker, the kind of educational culture that Dr. Mallory created was common among African-American schools in the South. Walker debunks the myth in the story of American education that segregation has long been synonymous with inequality. She argues instead that many segregated schools provided an excellent education. Walker argues for a "re-view of segregated schools [that] will contribute to a fuller understanding of them as educational institutions."¹¹¹

Despite their lack of resources, African-American schools practiced "institutional

¹¹¹ E. Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Can Institutions Care? In Beyond Desegregation* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996), 213.

caring.” In a case study of the Cashwell County Training School of North Carolina, Walker found that school administrators, teachers, and staff were committed to addressing the holistic needs of students. Cashwell’s teachers and principal developed meaningful relationships with students, and, through their guidance of extracurricular clubs and activities, identified and affirmed students’ talents:

I label this type of caring *institutional caring* because it combines the presence of interpersonal relationships with a supportive school structure. That is, the school as an institution identified the academic, social or psychological needs of students (much as a caring individual teacher might) and through its policy arranged for those needs to be met.¹¹²

In institutions that modeled institutional caring, writes Walker, teachers were caregivers who also often serve as encouragers, benefactors, counselors, and race cheerleaders.

Instilling racial pride was particularly important in the Mississippi context. H. Church Carlyle, Jr. contends that his Saints experience was critical to his formation of a positive self-identity. In particular Dr. Mallory helped him develop “a sense of pride” as a black man. He suggests that beyond positive racial identity, students were also encouraged to protest the segregated racial order of the day:

It was Dr. Mallory who had the students of Saints boycott white businesses because those businesses would not treat us properly when we entered

¹¹² Walker, 216

their stores. Even the peace marchers on the way to Washington with their wagons and mules and tired souls slept on our campus and refreshed themselves at the request of Dr. Mallory. She supported and encouraged me and others to work in the failed campaign of Charles Evers (brother of the late Medgar Evers) when he ran for governor of Mississippi. Under the leadership of Dr. Mallory, we worked as voting rights advocates and put our lives in danger as we tried to register local black citizens. To our campus came the late Kivie Kaplan, former board chairman of the NAACP, and former civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer to seek out Dr. Mallory advice and counsel along with other great leaders.¹¹³

Nathaniel Stampley shared Carlyle's impression. In a show of solidarity with those on the front lines of freedom struggles, Stampley recalls that Saints hosted Freedom Democratic Party meetings on its campus. When activists in the Poor People's Campaign were on their way to Washington, D.C. for a historic march, Saints hosted the caravan.

Saints' motto, "Walk in Dignity, Talk in Dignity and Live in Dignity" defines the goals of character education in a COGIC context. In the service of that goal, teachers and administrators also responded to the challenges in students' personal lives. Sometimes they took the role of surrogate parents. Officials tried their best to accommodate students who were exceptionally challenged. No one was excluded from the community for lack of talent or ability.

¹¹³ Jr. H. Church Carlyle, "The Accommodation and Liberation of Women," *Journal of Religious Thought* 52/53, no. (1996): 80.

Walker suggests that understanding the positive achievements of segregated schools may shed some light on educational reform. As the achievement gap between black and white students continues to grow, Walker proposes that educators reexamine the benefits of segregated education.

The Decline of Black Boarding Schools

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case is recognized as one of the most significant in American education. In the famous ruling, the nation's highest court declared segregation in the public schools to be unconstitutional, thereby changing the future of American education. Many black Americans, including social commentator W. E. B. Du Bois, hailed the decision as an important milestone while others, including famed black anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, saw the decision as an impediment to progress.¹¹⁴ Hurston argued that the decision validated the sad but popular belief that black education had to be validated by whites. Hurston's fears were realized in the days following the *Brown* ruling, as enrollments at predominantly black schools, public and private, declined.

The *Brown* ruling was the first in a legislative series designed to expand opportunities for black youth that unintentionally impacted enrollment at

¹¹⁴ Waldo E. Martin, *Brown V. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston Bedford/St. Martin's 1998), 33.

private black secondary schools and colleges.¹¹⁵ The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 had unforeseen implications for the viability of private black colleges. Enrollment at black private colleges decreased significantly as schools that were once off-limits to African Americans began competing for top black students. With limited resources, small schools could not compete. The waning appeal of rural, private, predominantly black boarding school/junior colleges was also due in part to competition from state schools in the aftermath of integration. In his 1958 survey of black colleges, Stephen Wright speculated that most private black schools would falter under the pressures of integration and competition from state schools, among other things:

The Negro private colleges which, at the time of their founding, with rare exception, provided the only avenue for the higher education of Negroes, face aggressive competition from the rapidly developing state-supported institutions. The very existence of the weaker ones is being threatened by the vital role being played by regional accrediting agencies as they work to strengthen higher education. Furthermore, both integration and the expanding vocational opportunities for Negroes may jeopardize the future enrollment in the Negro private college, as Negroes seek to avail themselves of these new opportunities—preparation for which will involve access to a wider variety of curricula than the Negro private college, with few exceptions, can offer.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Henry Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁶ Stephen Wright, "The Future of the Negro Private College: Philosophy and Program," *The Journal of Negro Education* 27, no. 3 (1958): 412.

Wright's predictions were realized in the coming decades. Integration may have had an impact on Saints' academic life. Enrollment at Saints declined and, along with it, the school's strong academic reputation. My interviews with students who attended after integration suggest that most would rate the academic environment as fair or average at best. Though I did not collect many interviews with students who matriculated prior to the Brown ruling and the enforcement of integration, I suspect that of the majority of attendees prior to integration would perceive the academic program as rigorous or better than average. Furthermore, students' perception of lessened academic rigor post-integration is supported by the observations of a former administrator who worked there in the late 1970s. When Jacqueline Wheelock and her husband arrived on the Saints campus in January 1976, the school was struggling to maintain its small student body and its historic legacy:

Historically Saints was revered. . . . [I]f you can imagine a school that was where the students were well groomed, taught all kinds of social graces, taught to be shall I say, a cut above socially, intellectually in an area as economically depressed as Holmes County has historically been, then Saints became something of a beacon for African-Americans and something to be respected by if I can use such a term as the mainstream race in the area. . . . Young African-American students well-behaved, beautiful singing ability, learning in a school led by an African-American female. So, the school historically was revered when we got there. But some of that had diminished by the mid-seventies, probably largely due to the fact that [Mallory] was aging at that time and again, she was having the

same problems that all private schools have. And if you layer that with again the geography, the issue of race, then you can see where the school was having had its problems.¹¹⁷

Wheelock attributes the school's waning academic reputation to the physical decline of the school's president. But it is also plausible that competition from better-equipped, better-financed integrated schools contributed to the academic climate change. Wheelock's keen insights about the instability of black private schools in general were on target. Of the three most notable black boarding schools in Mississippi, only Piney Woods Country Life School remains open. Utica Institute was consolidated with Hinds Community College in 1982, and Saints closed its doors in 1983.

Conclusions

Saints lived in two worlds. As a Pentecostal school, it was deeply concerned about the moral plight of mainstream Christianity and widespread moral decline. In contrast to the "high church" liturgies adopted in several more established, historically black colleges and universities that the school idolized, Saints officials stressed expressive, charismatic worship during chapel. They pressed upon students the importance of being set apart, developing habits of religious practice, and preserving the Holiness-Pentecostal way of life. Saints' commitment to Pentecostal values was reflected in more than just campus

¹¹⁷ Interview with Jacqueline Wheelock, interview by Anjulet Tucker, summer 2007, Madison, Mississippi.

religious life. Consistent with Pentecostal tradition, Saints was more accommodating of women's participation in the life of the school. Women did more than just keep the campus alive—their efforts undergirded the school's fundraising success. At the same time, as an independent black school in the rural South, Saints embodied the calls for racial solidarity and self-help characteristic of the day.

Many prominent COGIC leaders would trace the beginnings of their spiritual journeys to Saints as well. COGIC had yet to establish a seminary for the training of its ministers. As a place where young people could learn first-hand about habits of religious practice and about COGIC traditions, Saints served as a pseudo-seminary. Those who would become active on the COGIC national stage in ministry after leaving Saints are too numerous to list here. Some of the most well-known include recording artist Juanita Bynum, pastor and activist Yvette Flunder, and the inaugural dean of C. H. Mason Seminary, Dr. Leonard Lovett. After leaving Saints, Whitehead became a pastor in Detroit and now looks back to his days at Saints as his starting place for spiritual introspection.

Because most of the former students I interviewed are still active in COGIC, I suspect they had reservations about reporting unfavorably about their experiences or about any of the personalities involved in the school's history. They may have also felt uncomfortable elaborating on the negatives because I am a COGIC outsider. For example, one active COGIC member declined to participate in the study after questioning me about my connection to COGIC and

my religious convictions. She was perhaps unsure if I would use her recollections of Dr. Mallory in an unflattering manner. It may be that the loudest voices of disappointment with Saints are from non-COGIC students, but because my sample of students was not representative of non-COGIC students, it is impossible to speculate what these students thought.

What I gleaned from the former students I interviewed was that Saints' greatest accomplishment was its creation of a unique learning environment in which young people could discover the best of themselves. Although approval of the leadership's strict disciplinary tactics was not unanimous, most of the students I spoke with overwhelmingly agreed that the learning culture was supportive of their post-high school success. Former administrators shared a love for COGIC and a desire to use their intellectual gifts for its advancement.

Saints' ties to the COGIC National Church made it less independent than schools like Piney Woods. As early as 1920, Saints had been declared part of COGIC's "National Work" when the school was officially recognized during the denomination's national convocation. Though Saints was largely financially independent from COGIC for the majority of its existence, it was still under the auspices of the COGIC National Church, and thus affected at times by volatile and disruptive denominational politics. The odds were stacked against Saints, and eventually the school would close under the weight of internal and external pressures.

CHAPTER THREE

Charisma and Continuity

The sixties and seventies are remembered as two of the most tumultuous decades in U.S. history, defined in large part by the quests for civil rights and women's equality. As the nation struggled to find its way, so did the Church of God in Christ. In this chapter I discuss internal developments in the young denomination that shaped Saints' destiny.

Since its inception, COGIC's power structure has placed ultimate secular and religious authority in the hands of its most senior bishop. This practice has at times been a hindrance to progress, as reforms made under one bishop could be lost in an instant at the whim of the next. In particular, too many decisions regarding the church's scholastic endeavors have been left up to the presiding bishop. As a result, the denomination has failed to pursue a consistent vision of its educational mission and has been unable to institutionalize an educational program.

COGIC's founder and first presiding bishop, Charles Mason, never sought secular or political power; it was bestowed upon him. COGIC members developed a strong devotion to him, affectionately referring to him as "Dad" Mason, looking to him for guidance in difficult times, and relying on him for interpretation of all matters, secular and religious. His long tenure as the presiding bishop of COGIC and his full support of Arenia Mallory as the head of Saints allowed the school to grow and develop for five decades. But with Mason's death in 1961, Saints lost a

staunch supporter, and in the ensuing controversy over who was to be the next leader of COGIC, Saints' mission often took a back seat. Furthermore, succeeding bishops faced challenges to their secular and religious authority never faced by Mason.

The leader who succeeded Mason did not view Saints as central to the church's overall mission. The James Oglethorpe Patterson Administration (1968–1990) set new priorities for the denomination, which included making Memphis, Tennessee—not Lexington, Mississippi—the center of COGIC life. Patterson campaigned in the late 1970s and early 1980s to build a centralized COGIC campus in downtown Memphis that would include a new university called All Saints University (ASU). Discomfort with Patterson's executive decisions regarding the construction of the new university caused friction within the denomination. When questions about the limits of his secular authority arose, Patterson took the critiques personally. The succeeding administration (1990–1995) under Henry Louis Ford abandoned Patterson's ASU education project. Ford, like Patterson, used the weight of his office to shift the denomination's educational vision, turning attention back to Lexington by reopening Saints in 1993. But when Ford died in 1995, the school fell off the COGIC list of priorities once again.

During the first period of Saints history, women's efforts were supported by the organizational structure. But with shifts in leadership in the national church, women's roles were reassessed. Perhaps threatened by women's autonomy in the educational sphere, the predominately male leadership of the

national church replaced Saints, a symbol of gendered work, with educational initiatives headed by men.

Women's Leadership and Education in COGIC

That a woman occupied the position of president at Saints and headed its college initiative was quite unusual for a black college. Mallory's leadership is best viewed within the context of Pentecostal attitudes toward women and education. Historically, as studies by Michelle Jacques-Early, Anthea Butler, and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes demonstrate, women in the Church of God in Christ often gained visibility and influence through their participation in the church's educational endeavors.¹¹⁸ Excluded from the clergy, women were recruited as religious instructors and in this capacity were instrumental in training generations of men who would become the church's top leaders (many of whom, ironically, would become coconspirators in oppressing women). Gilkes suggests it was the "Sanctified Church," a term that encompasses Holiness-Pentecostal churches, which "professionalized" educational work when their Baptist and Methodist counterparts had marginalized Christian education.¹¹⁹ She argues that the Sanctified Church prioritized black education, in part because it was founded

¹¹⁸ See Michelle Jacques Early, *In the world, but not of it: the socio-theological framework of womanhood in the Church of God in Christ*. Dissertation, Emory University, 2003; Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "Together in Harness" in *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Micheline R. Malson et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

¹¹⁹ Gilkes, 225.

during a time when education was one of the black community's most pressing concerns. This historical coincidence contributed to the expanded role of women as educators, who served disproportionately in this field. Gilkes elaborates,

The growth of women's roles as teachers resulted from a combination of male decisions and female enterprise. The male church organizers shared the larger cultural value of education, and their decisions to recruit female educators converged with the women's desires for important roles in their churches and with trends toward black women's education in the wider community. . . . Thus the deployment of women teachers in black education was carried out with almost total disregard for the dominant culture's norms; these women were not limited to teaching children or relegated to roles subordinate to men's.¹²⁰

Gilkes's observations hold especially true for COGIC; Anthea Butler argues that women served on the front lines of the denomination's religious educational system. Even before the establishment of the school in Lexington, women took leadership roles in the Bible Band movements of the nineteenth century, programs designed to spread literacy and the Gospel in rural communities.¹²¹ According to Butler, the role of teacher had special significance for African-American women, whose career alternatives often involved accepting subservient roles. However, the activities of these early ambassadors of education alarmed some men:

¹²⁰ Gilkes, 232.

¹²¹ Butler, 11-33.

Unfortunately it was also a position that illuminated the illiteracy of preachers, who were generally uneducated. For untrained pastors who relied on charisma and preaching skill in order to hold together their congregations, female teachers, and especially female teachers who could open the scriptures and expound on them, could be a serious threat to their authority. Bible Band work among women had exacerbated this threat, and even if Pentecostal beliefs maintained the outpouring of the Holy Spirit affected both sexes equally, in practice that equality was interpreted in keeping with the patriarchal norms already entrenched in black churches.¹²²

The roles of women in the educational realm of COGIC were parallel to those of women active in social movement organizations of the Civil Rights era. Writing about leadership in the Civil Rights era, Belinda Robnett argues that women were prevented from assuming roles as “formal leaders” of movement organizations. She argues that analyzing women’s participation necessitates new definitions of leadership. Robnett takes issue with Aldon Morris, whose work on the Civil Rights movement highlighted the link between charisma and black male church leaders who carried the movement forward. Her reservation is that Morris’ reading privileges black male contributions:

Morris describes charisma as an outgrowth of the interactions between a minister and his followers, an interaction determined by the institution of the church and Black culture. Such an explanation necessarily precludes the emergence of women as charismatic leaders, since within the institutional context of the Black church and within the context of the

¹²² Butler, 35.

culture, they could never be viewed as such. Yet the findings of my study suggest that women were indeed charismatic leaders, as in just the context that Weber describes.¹²³

Furthermore Robnett argues that Morris' study casts men as leaders and women as followers.

Robnett's extended discussion of the gender dynamics of social movement organizations aides in the analysis of the interaction of gender and the COGIC power structure. Women in COGIC faced a similar dilemma as women in some social movement organizations; gender excluded them from formal power in the COGIC National church. Denied the opportunity to exercise their talents in governance of the denomination, women created opportunities to showcase their leadership ability. In addressing the church's educational needs, COGIC women ventured into uncharted territory, digging out schools and pioneering other educational activities. Their leadership in the educational system of the church closely resembled that of "bridge leaders discussed by Robnett:

Bridge leaders were not always women, but it was the most accessible and acceptable form of leadership available to them. In general, women were excluded as formal leaders because of their sex, but this did not deter their leadership efforts in the movement. Women were not simply organizers within the civil rights movement; as bridge leaders they were critical mobilizers of civil rights activities. Gender, which operated as a construct

¹²³ Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

of exclusion, produced a particular context in which women participated. This gendered power structure served to strengthen the informal tier of leadership, thus providing a strong mobilizing force within the grassroots sector.¹²⁴

As educators, women occupied what Belinda Robnett and others have referred to as “free space.” In the Civil Rights context, while “formal leaders possess institutional and organizational power,” Robnett explains,

[B]ridge leaders make similar decisions except that their organizational and mobilization skills are performed within what Evans and Boyte term a “free space.” Such a free space might be defined as a niche that is not directly controlled by formal leaders or those in their inner circle. It is unclaimed space that is nevertheless central to the development of the movement, since linkages and developed within it...In all cases, women’s power was largely derived from autonomous pioneering activities rather than through their titled or hierarchical position within the organization.¹²⁵

Robnett’s critical insight helps us to better interpret the actions of COGIC women educators. Women were not merely laborers in the COGIC educational system—they founded, directed, and sustained it. For many women, Charles Mason’s leadership of the denomination was critical. His sanctioning of Saints and endorsement of its female leader symbolized his support for women’s exploration and expansion of “free spaces.”

¹²⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 21.

It is nearly impossible to overestimate the impact of Charles Mason's legacy on COGIC and its institutions. In 1991, thirty years after his death, a seven-foot cross was placed on the top of Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, where Mason is entombed. An illustration of the high esteem in which he was held, the 250-pound steel cross was commissioned to pay tribute to Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Charles Mason.¹²⁶ Mason exercised control over nearly every aspect of the life of the denomination, from promoting clergy to deciding the spiritual direction of the church. His executive authority was derived from his status as founder, his spiritual authority, his extraordinary abilities, and his presence. Followers believed that God had endowed Mason, who had been miraculously cured of a debilitating disease as a child, with special healing powers. Those close to Mason often spoke of an unusual, semi-divine quality about him that compelled people to follow him. For example, Coffey was divorced as a young woman and, based on Mason's teachings, did not remarry:

Bishop Mason didn't believe in double marriage. . . . He taught it to me and I steered clear. He said "don't marry no more" and I wanted to marry several times but I stayed alone and walked with God over 30 years. I walked alone through the beauty of my years because Bishop Mason said so. I obeyed everything I thought he wanted . . . to make and please him and help in this great Church of God in Christ.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ John Beifuss, "Cross to Bear Witness to 3 Great Men," *The Commercial Appeal* October 31, 1991. Martin Luther King gave his famous "Mountaintop Speech" from the pulpit of Mason Temple on April 3, 1968, the night before his assassination.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Coffey compares Mason to Jesus Christ himself:

I didn't want anything that Bishop Mason didn't have and didn't teach. I followed him and him only until the day of his death. I heard his voice and that only. It skimmed me like the teachings of the bible. I revere the teachings of our founder like I do the teachings of Peter, James, and John. . . . God blessed Bishop Mason to be like Jesus.¹²⁸

Coffey's remarks reflect the high esteem and special spiritual designation that many members reserved for Mason. Often described as a prophet who possessed mystical qualities, Mason's endorsement of a particular idea, individual practice, or initiative was the equivalent of divine sanction. In the years following his death, COGIC leaders would need only to imply Mason's endorsement of a project or idea in order to lend it legitimacy.

Mason was a critical ally for Saints' president Arenia Mallory. He granted her full autonomy over Saints and trusted her to do what she felt necessary with the school. Her friendship with the denomination's chief official, its most revered spiritual leader, helped her secure what little support she did receive. An entire stanza of Saints' school song was dedicated to Mason, indicating admiration and gratitude:

To Thee, Most Worthy Bishop Mason
 We love thy name always
 For the things you've done for Saints Industrial

¹²⁸ Audio Recordings of Charles Mason's Funeral, November 28, 1961; Released by A.T. Moore, 2008

God and Thee be praised

Though Mason never sanctioned the ordination of women, his recognition and appointment of women for church work was celebrated. In their recollections of Mason, many women who worked with and for the school seem to agree that he was generally accommodating of their interests and gave them space to do what was necessary.

Mason's death in 1961 was nothing short of cataclysmic for COGIC. Thousands mourned the leader's death and wondered together about the future of the church. Bobby Bean describes the somber mood:

The Church of God in Christ was in shock. The 54th Holy Convocation began with the saints, gathered together in Memphis, coming to grips with the realization that Bishop Mason was gone. As we moved through the first two days of the 1961 Holy Convocation, there was a great sense of loss. What were we to do without our Founder? On November 28, 1961, on the third day of the 54th Convocation, thousands, bishops, state supervisors, department heads, pastors, family, saints and friends gathered to witness a funeral to the magnitude of a state official. On that Thursday morning at 5am, Mason Temple every seat was taken. There was standing room, even in the balcony, five hours before the funeral was to begin. By 7am Mason Temple was filled to capacity, as the Church of God in Christ came to say goodbye to our beloved Founder and Father.¹²⁹

News of his demise was especially devastating for the Women's Department. In her fifteen-minute address to the grief stricken audience at Mason's funeral,

¹²⁹ Bean, 89.

Coffey argued for women's centrality to the church, referring to the women "the great majority" of the church. She reminded the audience that Mason had embraced women's contributions (he "spent much, much time with his daughters") and admonished the remaining male leadership to do the same.¹³⁰ Mallory used her opportunity to speak at the funeral to remind the church body and future leaders of the church of Mason's commitment to Saints. In her brief but moving remarks (which I include in their entirety), Mallory testified to the impact of Mason's support on both the school and her personally:

The best friend I ever had was Bishop Charles Harrison Mason. He believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. He helped me to hope when I had done hoping. He forgave me as a father for my faults. And he demanded that men and women give me a chance to build an institution for the church that he gave his life for. He sent his own children there when we didn't have an electric light, nothing but mud. He believed in Saints Industrial and Literary School. He visited several times a year. And in his active years he met every board meeting. When there would be instances where perhaps our misunderstandings would have closed its doors he would call us on our knees and keep us there 5 and 6 hours. Saints Junior College children number throughout the hundreds today and their children. [Those] that knew him loved him. And I am here today because he taught them and he taught me that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. And so a child came and knelt by the bed from far away Africa when I had given up hope of coming. And when that child, a young man Abraham Brown from Africa got through praying, I got up. For I seem to hear him say the prayer of faith shall save the sick. And when sister

¹³⁰ Recording of Mason Funeral, 1961.

Elsie Shaw called on the telephone 30 minutes later I said “I’ll be there by faith tomorrow.”

I was taught faith through the church and the doctrine that he preached. I was taught righteousness. If I am lost it is my own fault, for I have sat at the feet of Gamaliel, or greater than Gamaliel. Saints Junior College with its hundreds of children yet unborn at this time salutes our general, our loved one as we bid him farewell until the morning breaks. And on that morning we pledged Dad, that when you stand with the apostles to judge the world as I believe you will, there will be thousands of children coming out, out of Saints Junior College and their children’s children because you lived, because you loved, because you wanted a school for the church. And now farewell father, farewell.

Mallory’s underscoring of Mason’s admiration for Saints may have exposed her fear that the next group of leaders would not protect the school as Mason had. In fact, the future of the institution was in jeopardy.

In the years following Mason’s death, Mallory would have less and less control over the school to which she had dedicated her life. Despite the climate of acceptance of education as “women’s work,” critics questioned Mallory’s autonomy and sovereignty over the institution. In one record of minutes from a General Assembly meeting, a board member complained that Mallory failed to cooperate with requests to submit her whereabouts and provide information about her teachers’ attendance records. Fears that she had too much power likely stirred controversy.

The relationship between the Saints Board of Directors, COGIC's Board of Education, and Dr. Mallory is not completely clear, but evidence suggests it was at times contentious. The friction was greatest in the decade prior to Mason's death. The Saints Board of Directors had been in charge of making decisions about the direction of the school and the execution of finances, although we do not know to what extent they exercised their authority, or to what extent Mallory was required to consult with the Board. It is clear that in matters of finances Mallory often acted alone in her fundraising efforts. One report of the General Assembly praised her for independently raising ten thousand dollars for the completion of a building project.¹³¹

However, in 1951, the COGIC Board of Education dissolved the Saints Board of Directors, citing its "failure to carry out its responsibility for the past number of years." This decision was made in the same meeting in which Mallory refused to give a record of her whereabouts and detailed information about her teachers' attendance records. It is impossible to know if the increasing appeals for money for the water system, fire damage repairs, and other major expenses prompted the dissatisfaction of the COGIC Board of Education. From 1951 to 1961, the COGIC Board of Education took over the governance of Saints.

The records of COGIC General Assembly during the 1950s are incomplete, so we cannot know for sure what happened in this decade. We do know that the governance of Saints changed significantly under the new administration. It is

¹³¹ Hall and Dill, eds., December 1953.

not completely clear whether the changes were a reflection of the administration's disdain for Mallory's style of leadership, the result of a new vision for the educational system, or a combination of both.

Transfer of Power

Controversy over who would be the next leader of COGIC raged on for seven years after Mason's death. O. T. Jones, Sr. assumed the title of Senior Bishop in December of 1962. As the oldest living bishop appointed by Mason, Jones was nominated for the post and elected by the General Assembly without incident. But Jones's authority was contested just two years into his tenure. The details surrounding Jones's election and contestation could easily fill volumes; indeed, COGIC chronicler Robert Owens has devoted a book to the period between 1961 and 1968, which some still refer to as the "Dark Years." Jones's election, contestation and ultimate removal from office are significant in that they signify COGIC's allegiance to a leadership model that was susceptible to personality politics and manipulation. This kind of climate was not conducive to institution building, and Saints suffered the consequences.

In anticipation of his death (or least of his physical inability to carry on the day-to-day affairs of the organization), Mason made provisions to transfer his powers to a Special Executive Committee. This played out as planned until December of 1962, when Jones was unexpectedly nominated for the top post. He secured the title of Senior Bishop when the General Assembly voted in his favor.

According to Owens, Jones performed all of the tasks that Mason had: appointing bishops, presiding over national meetings, and the like.

Opponents challenged Jones two years later on the grounds that his power should have been symbolic and that, although he had been elected, he had not been endowed with the powers that Mason had. A series of letters were distributed unofficially to the COGIC body by both sides—Jones’s supporters and his challengers—each charging the other with failing to follow proper protocol. Legal intervention became necessary, as the heated exchanges between the two groups grew more difficult to control and threatened to split the denomination into two warring factions. The dispute was settled by the courts, which mandated that a Constitutional Convention be convened to decide who should occupy the highest office.

Robert Owens asserts that the legal controversy was the catalyst for a major shift in COGIC governance:

Following in the footsteps of the Founder, Bishop C. H. Mason, Bishop O. T. Jones, Sr. had attempted to carry on the tradition of an autocratic leader in a charismatic organization. This combined with the loss of the founding charismatic leader naturally changed COGIC into a traditional-type organization wrapped in the outward trappings of bureaucracy. This attempt to carry on the style of leadership used by Bishop Mason resonated with a predilection the first generation of COGIC leaders exhibited for a strong paramount leader who set policy and made appointments as he saw fit. However, this continuation of business as usual was challenged by a second generation of COGIC leaders who appealed to the structural forms of bureaucracy, a rational-legal system of committees, rules and regulations, which the founder had constructed to

add form to what was initially and what remained until his death a charismatic organization.¹³²

The scope of Owen's analysis is restricted to 1961–1968, which is perhaps why he argues confidently that COGIC had been changed as a result of the Jones controversy. An extended view reveals little evidence of COGIC's investment in bureaucratic leadership. Instead, COGIC officials remained wedded to a style of governance that prevented them from establishing long-lasting institutions, particularly Saints.

After a long, public legal battle and historic election, Mason's son-in-law, James Oglethorpe Patterson, took charge of the denomination and ousted O. T. Jones. Like Mason, J. O. Patterson had Mississippi roots. In 1934, Patterson had solidified his place in COGIC history by marrying Bishop Mason's daughter, Deborah Mason. According to one former administrator who witnessed the two interact, the tension between Mallory and Patterson was almost tangible. That friction, some speculated, stemmed from Mallory's disapproval of Patterson's marriage to Deborah Mason and her perception that Patterson would not support Saints as vigorously as Mason had.¹³³ Additionally, Mallory's "tell-it-like-it-is" relationship with certain bishops may have rubbed Patterson the

¹³² Robert R. Owens, *Never Forget! Leadership, Routinization, and Transformation in a Charismatic Organization* (Fairfax: Xulon Press, 2002), 188.

¹³³ Donald Wheelock, Interview with author, 2007

wrong way. One student recalls regular disagreements between Mallory and COGIC bishops:

There were times when Dr. Mallory would be talking to some of the Bishops over the telephone about various problems. I'd start out of the room and she would say to me, "I want you to stay and listen to what I am saying. You may have to witness to what I'm saying someday. No one would believe the problems I have, and the things I go through."¹³⁴

It is also possible that Mallory became aware of Patterson's next major project to build Saints Center, and was deeply fearful that it would consume the denomination's time, money, and energy, stealing valuable financial and human resources away from Saints. Whatever the source of their contentious relationship, Mallory would not live through most of the Patterson administration. Years of traveling on behalf of Saints and fulfilling her obligations with the National Council of Negro Women took a physical toll on her. The lifelong educator retired in 1976 and died on Mother's Day, 1977.

"Bound for ASU"

Patterson promoted a cosmopolitan vision for COGIC—and Saints was not part of that plan. Patterson sought to elevate the church's status by deepening its commitment to theological education and its interactions with the black

¹³⁴ Dovie Simmons and Olivia Martin, *Down Behind the Sun: The Story of Arenia Mallory* (Self-published, 1983), 86.

Protestant mainstream. Under his administration, COGIC elected four representatives to the National Black Churches. In 1970, the Charles Harrison Mason Theological Seminary was established in Atlanta, Georgia. This new seminary was part of the Interdenominational Theological Center, which was home to five other seminaries sponsored by the National Baptist Convention, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Mason Seminary's enrollment was small (in 1974 only 26 students were enrolled) but significant. The opening of the seminary broadcasted to other black Protestant denominations that black Pentecostals were concerned about training their clergy.

In the mid-1970s, J. O. Patterson began a national campaign to build Saints Center, a multi-million dollar, multi-functional facility in the heart of downtown Memphis. The scope of the project was far-reaching and would require an unprecedented investment of COGIC's time and resources. Saints Center Campus, on the site of the historic Chisca Hotel, would be home to a new headquarters for the denomination, a fine arts center, a publishing house, a domed amphitheater, a wax museum, and an institution of higher learning called All Saints University (ASU). Patterson lobbied for and received endorsement from the General Assembly for the massive project in 1976. Authorized to solicit funds and procure the downtown property, Patterson embarked on a nearly decade-long campaign to win the commitment of COGIC laity to the concept. The energy around the much-anticipated center was captured in a series of

articles in the 1970s and 1980s in Memphis-based papers such as *Commercial Appeal* and in COGIC's official publication, *The Whole Truth*.

Patterson's desire to make Memphis the center of COGIC life left little room for Lexington's future as an active center of education and worship. On the surface, Patterson's initiation of Help Week seemed evidence to the contrary. During the week-long Help Week rallies, Patterson and a team of volunteers traveled to Lexington to restore the deteriorating buildings that made up the once-thriving Saints campus. Many COGIC members made the pilgrimage to the small Mississippi city, heeding their presiding bishop's call to assist in the revitalization effort. The trips almost always included visits to the house where Mason was born and the jail where he was allegedly arrested for preaching the gospel. Nightly services at St. Paul Church of God in Christ, the congregation Mason once pastored, created lasting memories for volunteers nostalgic for COGIC's past. Members who were able to make the trips to Lexington were celebrated in *The Whole Truth* for their volunteerism and commitment to restoring Mason's place of birth and the denomination's first school to a place of honor.¹³⁵ Patterson's interest in revitalizing Lexington effectively turned the city into a memorial to COGIC's past, allowing him to pursue his plans to build ASU without alienating those who wanted to pay homage to the denomination's history.

¹³⁵ "Presiding Bishop Brings New Week to Church "Help Week", " *The Whole Truth* Special-February 1986.

Building Saints Center in Memphis was part of a larger effort on Patterson's part to remake COGIC's image. Frustrated with the perception of COGIC as a small and irrelevant church, Patterson constantly sought opportunities to showcase COGIC's force and influence. He was particularly aware of, greatly influenced by, and somewhat embarrassed by developments in similar religious organizations that highlighted COGIC's limitations. In an interview with *The Whole Truth* Patterson expressed his disappointment over COGIC's standing in relation to other groups. Questioned about the church's educational budget, Patterson responded:

We are talking about half a million dollars. When you compare and I think that is what we need to do, I think the leadership of our church needs to be exposed, and when I say leadership I am talking about pastors, missionaries and General Board members really need to be exposed to church administration. They don't know what church administration is all about, many of them. Here we have the Assemblies of God and we say that they are not as large as we are, but their budget for missions alone, not talking about the other operations, budget, headquarters over there which employs over five hundred people, we are only talking about missions and missions budget was one million dollars. The Church of God Prophecy in Cleveland, TN, little babies under us, do not have more than a tenth of the members that the Church of God in Christ boasts of and their operating budget was over eight million dollars a year. So it's just ironic, it's pitiful when we say that the school uses half our budget, that amounts to about five hundred thousand dollars.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ "Exclusive Interview with Bishop J.O. Patterson," *The Whole Truth* August 1980, 1, 7.

Patterson imagined that a successful Saints Center would serve as a symbol of COGICs progress and maturity as a denomination.

All Saints University (ASU) was to be the centerpiece of Saints Center. An article in the June 1979 issue of *The Whole Truth* captured the sentiments of many COGIC members who would become fervent supporters of ASU. The author lamented the lack of educational options for Pentecostal youth. He accused the public schools of indoctrinating students with humanistic values and of supporting atheism. The contributor described the 1960s as an unfortunate time when people grew too comfortable with revolting against authority. The result was a hopeless generation “with diminishing skills, lack of purpose and sense of aimlessness.”¹³⁷ The author called for parents to seek out Christian educational environments where “Christian teachers, administrators, and parents [could] work together with the Holy Spirit to instill within students a belief in God.” To the relief of parents with college-aged children, ASU offered just that.

Notices of fundraisers for the Saints Center project dominated the church’s publications. Patterson and a team of bishops from the Saints Center board held rallies around the country to promote their cause. Efforts included the establishment of Saints Center Shareholders Clubs, garage sales, festivals, benefit dinners, and backyard sales. Other creative money-making methods

¹³⁷ L. Whitsett, "Public Schools No Longer Safe for Christian Youth," *The Whole Truth* June 1979, 1.

included sales of Saints Center memorabilia, such as lotion and soap, and sales of a commemorative Chronological Bible.¹³⁸

It appeared that the massive fundraising efforts for Saints Center were a huge success. An August 1980 *Whole Truth* article reported that the General Board of Bishops had raised \$700,000 toward the headquarters project. In progress reports to the body, Patterson announced that the National Church had taken in at least \$2 million for the Saints Center development. The prospect of a university in Memphis compelled some COGIC members to earn degrees so they could work and teach at ASU. Excited about the prospect of a school that would cater to them, some young people had “I’m Bound for ASU” printed on t-shirts, even before ground had been broken for the new campus.¹³⁹

“It’s like putting money in a bag with a hole in it”—Elder Milton Jackson¹⁴⁰

The excitement about Saints Center would eventually turn to anger. In the mid-1980s, reports of misconduct began to surface. Little progress had been made since the denomination purchased land in downtown Memphis. Opponents accused Patterson of nepotism for hiring his son and daughter-in-law to work at the Saints Center headquarters. When some COGIC members asked for evidence that the money raised had not been misused, things turned ugly. In defense of his

¹³⁸ L. Diane Bennett, "Reality of Dreams," *The Whole Truth* October 1984, 1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Penni Crabtree, "Knoxville College Rejects Cogic Affiliation Offer: Offer of Donation Raises Questions," *The Commercial Appeal* May 16, 1987.

actions, Patterson often used the Bible to fend off critics and to cajole members to invest in the “God-given vision” of Saints Center. Commenting on the fundraising efforts, Patterson declared in an Open Letter to the members in 1979, “How well we progress. . . is a direct measure of our love for God.” He continued:

Decide now to directly participate in the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by sharing with Him that which he has shared with you. I challenge you, in the humblest possible manner, to assume your rightful personal “Faith Share” in the future world-wide outreach ministry of our great church.¹⁴¹

In a series of interviews with *The Whole Truth*, Patterson defended his executive decisions when asked some tough questions about the accountability of funding. The leader concluded confidently, “God cannot find anything crooked about my dealing with finance where the Church of God in Christ is concerned. And if God can’t find it I know no one else can.”¹⁴²

“The Saints Shall Stand with God’s Man”—Bennett

Patterson amassed healthy support among church members. The October 1984 issue of *The Whole Truth* featured an article submitted by a youth active in the denomination, who ardently defended Patterson’s leadership on the grounds

¹⁴¹ J.O. Patterson, “Open Letter from the Presiding Bishop ” *The Whole Truth* June 1979, 2.

¹⁴² “Exclusive Interview of Whole Truth with Presiding Bishop J.O. Patterson,” *The Whole Truth* September 1984, 4.

that his leadership had been divinely ordained. The author expressed concern that all the attention to the “vague, misguided forced called ‘progress and accountability’” was tearing the church apart, destroying the dreams of young people who eagerly anticipated attending a COGIC college, and attacking Patterson personally. The distressed author wrote,

I am very much in favor of accountability, credibility and business ethics in the Church. However I abhor the MOTIVE and MANNER in which it has been introduced. For it is extremely obvious that this recent surge for “procedural excellence” is an “appropriate” FOOHOLD to wage an attack on OUR presiding bishop.

The tone of the article is bold and defiant. The author’s strategic use of capitalization shows her allegiances:

HE IS GOD’S MAN FOR OUR CHURCH FOR THESE TIMES.

The Church of God in Christ is a Spirit-led Church, the WORD of God is our guide and we Saints DO believe in Scripture. “TOUCH NOT MY ANOINTED AND DO MY PROPHET NO HARM.” THE SAINTS SHALL STAND WITH GOD’S MAN.

Patterson supporters used spiritual language to describe the attacks against their chosen leader. They believed that God elevated Patterson to his post, and that “man-made” tactics such as audits should not be used to remove him. Indeed, Patterson did seem able to convince the majority of COGIC members of his ability to lead the church out of organizational and spiritual disarray; he was elected to six consecutive terms as presiding bishop.

COGIC's dirty laundry was aired publicly, as the infighting often made the local newspapers. Tempers were inflamed in 1987 when a Knoxville newspaper reported that COGIC officials were attempting to negotiate a consolidation with Knoxville College.¹⁴³ In exchange for a \$2 million donation, COGIC had asked for representation on the Knoxville College Board of Directors and for the college to change its name to "All Saints University." The scandal confirmed what many had feared—that there were no active plans to build the school that officials had promised for over a decade.

Patterson's son, J. O. Patterson, Jr., defended the church's delay. The younger Patterson told a Memphis newspaper in November of 1987:

You have to remember we're a black organization and we do not have at our disposal quite the funds that some of the major white denominations have at their disposal. It takes us a little more time to get where we want to go, but just as surely as I'm sitting here, we're going to develop that college on that land.¹⁴⁴

The failure of the Saints Center project reveals much about the denominational turmoil Saints confronted in its latter years. Attention to Saints Center and ASU prevented re-investment in Saints. News about Saints Academy (so renamed after the junior college division was dissolved in 1976) rarely made *The Whole Truth*, and, when it did, it was often overshadowed by news about Saints Center

¹⁴³ Crabtree.

¹⁴⁴ "Empty land yields concerns about university fund. Church Members suspect misuse." November 9, 1987.

and ASU. One report celebrated a Saints Academy fundraising dinner that brought in \$13,000. The money raised would go to incidentals excluded from the school's general budget, such as paving a parking lot and purchasing a school bus. The report of the dinner shared a page with an article celebrating the \$750,000 recently raised by the Board of Bishops for Saints Center. The ability of the denomination to raise millions of dollars for Saints Center and galvanize support for the yet-to-be All Saints University stood in remarkable contrast to its lack of support for Saints Academy.

In 1981, under the leadership of Donald Wheelock, Saints Academy obtained the second-highest accreditation rating (next to SACS) in Mississippi. Much to the dismay of many of the staff and administrators, this accomplishment did not translate into increased financial resources. In fact, after the cafeteria suffered a devastating fire in 1983, the national church issued a memorandum announcing the closing of the school.

The "Charismatic Tendency" in Black Churches

Examinations of the Jones, Ford, and Patterson administrations illustrate the centrality of charisma in COGIC. Decades before the German sociologist Max Weber theorized about charisma, bureaucracy, and religious authority, American-born sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois wrote about the unique skills and personality traits common to preachers in black religious traditions. Famously, Du Bois characterized black worship as being dominated by "the preacher, the

music and the frenzy.” He opined that the black preacher had a peculiar and important function in the life of the congregation:

The preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a “boss,” an intriguer, an idealist—all these he is, and ever, too, the centre of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number. The combination of a certain adroitness with deep-seated earnestness, of tact with consummate ability, gave him his preeminence, and helps him maintain it.¹⁴⁵

Du Bois observed that in order to successfully navigate the politics of congregational life, preachers in black churches needed to have a special quality; a certain type of charisma. This was especially critical in larger, urban churches:

A great church like Bethel of Philadelphia has over eleven hundred members, an edifice seating fifteen hundred persons and valued at one hundred thousand dollars, an annual budget of five thousand dollars, and a government consisting of a pastor with several assisting local preachers, an executive and legislative board, financial boards and tax collectors; general church meetings for making laws; subdivided groups led by class leaders, a company of militia, and twenty-four auxiliary societies. The activity of churches like this are immense and far-reaching, and are among the most powerful Negro rulers in the World.¹⁴⁶

While Du Bois stops short of developing a full theory of charisma, his observations of the roles of black preachers set the stage for subsequent theories

¹⁴⁵ Phil Zuckerman, *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Dubois*(Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), 164.

¹⁴⁶ Bois, Gates, and Oliver, 122.

on black congregations' loyalty and attraction to religious authorities. For example, nearly a century after Du Bois, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya discussed the "dialectic between charismatic versus bureaucratic" in their groundbreaking work *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. The authors observe, "the majority of black churches and denominations tend to lean toward the charismatic pole of the continuum, especially when compared to white mainstream denominations and churches which tend to have more bureaucratic forms." They suspect that the "charismatic tendency in black churches" has its origins in slave religion:

From their beginnings in the "invisible institution" of slave religion, African Americans have invested far more authority in the charismatic personality of the preacher than in any organizational forms of bureaucratic hierarchy. The origins of this charismatic emphasis stemmed from the oral traditions of African cultures and religions, where people with the best speaking abilities were viewed as gifted, and in the United States from the prohibition against teaching slaves to read and write, which resulted in a greater stress upon the development of an oral tradition in African American culture.¹⁴⁷

In their survey of the seven major black denominations, Lincoln and Mamiya found that not much has changed in the role of the preacher. Even in congregations in which congregants are better educated and upwardly mobile, the preference for charismatic authority has not abated. The pastors of these

¹⁴⁷ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press 1990), 14.

middle- to upper-middle class congregations may have exceptional organizational skills, but this does not replace the requirement (unspoken or not) that they have charismatic preaching ability. Pentecostal scholar James Tinney argues that a preference for charismatic leaders may have been especially strong among Pentecostals. Tinney contends that preachers had even more control over their congregations in black Pentecostal denominations, binding them to strict codes of obedience:

It follows, for instance, that the minister wields ultimate control in the Black Pentecostal church, subject to no one, not even his deacons. When members would be absent for whatever reason, they are taught to call the pastor in advance. . . . Even in terms of personal beliefs and prohibitions, the pastor's word is taken as law; and "the way I receive it" or "the way I was taught" often replaces, in actual practice, the Scriptures as the final touchstone of truth. "Obedience is better than sacrifice," supplants reference to any Protestant priesthood of believers. For those with contrary opinions, the pastor may employ "silencing," which forbids a member to sing, testify, "shout," or serve in any capacity until he has been reconciled to the minister.¹⁴⁸

In light of Tinney's observations, it is no wonder that COGIC has struggled to rein in its presiding bishops' power. That Patterson was elected six times, despite the allegations against him, demonstrated that COGIC members were protective of a particular kind of autocratic leadership style.

¹⁴⁸ James Tinney, "Doctrinal differences between black and white Pentecostals," *Spirit*, Vol.1, No.1, 41.

Conclusions

Saints operated until 1961 with the blessing of the national church because of Mason's implicit sanctioning of the institution, the financial support of local COGIC congregations and clergyman, the support of the Lexington community, and the persistence of Dr. Arenia C. Mallory. The local Mississippi congregations kept Saints in the consciousness of the national denomination for as long as they could. A change in leadership of the denomination in the late 1960s coincided with a change in the climate of education for blacks nationally. As COGIC leaders sought to assimilate into the Protestant mainstream (evidenced by the vision of All Saints University), centralizing the denomination's operations became a priority. Saints was left uncared for—a remnant of the old Mason era. Bishop Ford's attempts to resurrect Saints in the 1990s were unsuccessful in large part because he underestimated the resources it would take to make the institution academically strong. After Ford's death, another administration took charge and yet again proposed a new vision for the educational arm of the church that did not make Saints central.

The friction between Mallory and Patterson was more than just about personality politics. Patterson's election sparked greater organizational structure and centralization in COGIC, which effectively ousted women from the positions of authority they had developed in the less organized "free space" allowed to them by Mason. At a time when the women's liberation movement of the 1970's was demanding a voice and freedom in society, women in COGIC were going in reverse; they were excluded from the "inner circle" in the hierarchy of COGIC

leadership. Patterson reminded women that their commitment to Holiness demanded that they reject the women's liberation movement. COGIC women were to be modest in dress and in their actions, not haughty and bold. Under the guise of structural change and centralizing the denomination's operations, Patterson effectively dismantled Saints by steering the denomination's attention to the Saints Center project. Effectively, the proposed establishment of ASU reined in women's power. Such gender politics are hardly unique to COGIC; As religious movements become more institutionalized, women's power often declines.

CHAPTER FOUR

Assessing the Role of Saints in the Transformation of COGIC from “Sect” to “Church”

On the surface, the story of Saints’ demise presented in the previous chapter appears to be a drama animated primarily by internal church personality politics. But a more thorough look reveals the forces of organizational and religious change also at work. As demonstrated in chapters two and three, the relationships between Saints, its parent organization, COGIC, and society at large were complex and constantly shifting. In less than a century, COGIC moved from a “sect-like” to a “church-like” status, from existing in a high state of tension with its surrounding society, to courting the mainstream. As COGIC’s role within the black Protestant religious mainstream evolved, so, too, did Saints’ role within COGIC. When COGIC was at its most isolated, Saints served as an important public face of the denomination. The school signaled to the outside world that COGIC was not a cult, and that it was a “respectable” denomination, invested in education as many of its black Protestant counterparts were. As COGIC increasingly looked outward, Saints became a symbol of the group’s humble past. Its mere presence reminded COGIC members of the religious values the first generation of COGIC members held so dear. By preserving COGIC’s religious traditions in an educational setting, Saints helped to ensure that the COGIC way of life would be passed along to the next generation.

Church-Sect Theory as an Interpretative Lens

The best evidence that Pentecostals today are no longer considered social outcasts of American society is their high visibility in the political arena. The former Governor of Missouri, John Ashcroft, made headlines in 2001 when he was selected as Attorney General in the Bush Administration. Before being appointed to this highly coveted post, Ashcroft served as pastor of a congregation in a historic Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God, and as the president of its liberal arts college. Most recently, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, a longtime member of an Assemblies of God congregation, made national headlines as the nation's first female Vice Presidential candidate.¹⁴⁹ If Palin had succeeded in her bid, she would have replaced Ashcroft as the highest-ranking Pentecostal in U.S. history. On the other side of the political aisle, the Democratic National Committee's outspoken Chief of Staff, Rev. Leah Daughtery, proudly displayed her Pentecostal roots during the historic 2008 election. Charles Blake, the current presiding bishop of COGIC, received a platform at the Democratic Committee's pre-convention religious services.

¹⁴⁹ While many people remain skeptical of Palin's religious beliefs and comedians like HBO's Bill Maher regularly poke fun at her Pentecostal past, many Americans don't see her embrace of speaking in tongues, her participation in faith healing, belief in the imminent return of Christ, or acceptance of End Time theology as a laughing matter. Because of the proximity to the election, for now the best commentary on Palin's faith and Americans' rejection or acceptance of it can be found on the Internet. See "Biden, Articles of Faith: Religion News and Ideas from Boston and Beyond, Palin and faith at the Debate", October 2, 2008; CNN.com, "Pastor: GOP may be downplaying Palin's religious beliefs," September 9, 2008

In addition to growing visibility in the secular public arena, religious television regularly features a host of Pentecostal voices. Preachers such as Bishop T. D. Jakes, Evangelist Juanita Bynum, and Pastor Rod Parsley dominate programming on the widely popular religious television stations, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and the WORD Network.¹⁵⁰ A businessman, an author, and a pastor respectively, Jakes, Bynum and Parsley have collectively attracted millions of faithful followers from multiple denominations, demonstrating their broad appeal.

In contrast, Pentecostals at the turn of the nineteenth century were situated outside of the American religious mainstream by nearly every measure. They opposed trends in society that challenged their radical evangelical worldview, proudly proclaiming themselves to be “in the world but not of it.” In addition to their own rhetoric of separation, religious practices such as foot-washing, glossolalia, and faith healing isolated Pentecostals from their mainstream counterparts. Robert Mapes Anderson offered social reasons for Pentecostal’s expressive religious faith and rhetoric of rejection of the world. Though they came from all denominations (former Baptists, Methodists and Holiness members made up the majority), Pentecostals shared a deep resentment of the changes in their social climate, asserts Anderson. Predisposed to “religion

¹⁵⁰ For more on Jakes, who is affectionately called the “black Billy Graham,” see Shayne Lee, *America’s New Preacher*, (New York: NYU Press), 2005. Juanita Bynum made a name for herself after her “No More Sheets” series. Today the evangelist commands a healthy segment of the religious economic market. Rod Parsley is pastor of World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio.

of the Spirit,” early Pentecostals were made up disproportionately of the working class. They sought refuge from their dismal economic realities¹⁵¹ by embracing a new religious movement that rejected the world as the world had rejected them:

Pentecostalism was a movement born of radical social discontent, which, however, expended its revolutionary impulses in veiled, ineffectual, displaced attacks that amounted to withdrawal from the social struggle and passive acquiescence to a world they hated and wished to escape...Their social powerlessness was transformed into feelings of religious powerlessness, and its solution was sought through tapping the source of all power in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵²

According to Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan “The Pentecostals rejected society because they believed it to be corrupt, wicked, hostile and hopelessly lost.”¹⁵³ Synan adds that the rejection was mutual: “Society rejected the Pentecostals because it believed them to be insanely fanatical, self-righteous, doctrinally mistaken, and emotionally unstable.”¹⁵⁴ Pentecostals spent most of the first half of the twentieth century as religious minorities with little influence on the Protestant majority.

¹⁵¹ This explanation, he maintained, held true for Neo-Pentecostals as well, who might have improved their economic plight but were likely to suffer from status deprivation.

¹⁵² Anderson, 222.

¹⁵³ Synan 187.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid 187.

How Pentecostals moved from being labeled social misfits to power players in American life is the kind of question that sociologists of religion have long engaged. Church-sect theory, which is primarily about how religious groups change over time, offers a useful interpretative lens from which to examine the changes in Saints and in COGIC over time. The roots of what would become known as “church-sect theory” began in the work of the German sociologist, Max Weber who defined sects as “voluntary religious communities” and churches, on the other hand, as institutions that people were “*born into*.” It was the American theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr who developed the church-sect hypothesis and applied it to the American context.¹⁵⁵

In the decades to follow sociologists would put forth several definitions of churches and sects, making the terms confusing and powerless, according to some. Sociologist Benton Johnson sought to clarify the terms in an effort to make the theory more applicable to various cultures and religions. Johnson offered a more simplistic definition. Put succinctly, “A church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists. A sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists.”¹⁵⁶ Stephen Steinberg further refines Johnson’s contribution. Johnson’s definitions, he argues, “slightly misrepresents the meaning that is intended”:

¹⁵⁵ H Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*(Glouster: Peter Smith, 1987; reprint, 1987).

¹⁵⁶ See Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," *American Sociological Review* 28, no. (Aug 1963).

In Johnson's application of them, it becomes clear that the defining variable is not acceptance or rejection of the social environment, but a similar characteristic: whether or not there is a discrepancy or tension between the norms and values of the religious group, and those of the surrounding society.¹⁵⁷

Niebuhr argued that over time sects "almost always modified in the course of time by the national processes of birth and death."¹⁵⁸ He explained that changes to the structure, doctrine and ethics of sects were inevitable. These changes were often generational, he argued:

Rarely does a second generation hold the convictions it has inherited with fervor equal to that of its fathers, who fashioned these convictions in the heat of conflict and at the risk of martyrdom. As generation succeeds generation, the isolation of the community from the world becomes more difficult. Furthermore, wealth frequently increases when the sect subjects itself to the discipline of asceticism in work and expenditure...¹⁵⁹

In this thoughtful essay "Church-Sect Revisited" Benton Johnson exposes an underlying assumption in the theory—that sects always evolve in the direction of becoming more accommodating to the society. He urged that scholars be open to the possibility that sects are not always the weaker partner and that in some

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Steinberg, "Reform Judaism: The Origin and Evolution of A "Church Movement" " *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5, no. 1 (1965): 118.

¹⁵⁸ Niebuhr 19.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 20.

cases, they may have tremendous influence on the society in which they are embedded.

COGIC's Transformation

In his 1975 dissertation, sociologist James Shopshire studied the characteristics of black Pentecostal groups, and argued that they were moving along a church-sect continuum. Of all the groups, Shopshire notes that the Church of God in Christ had moved the farthest from the designation of a religious sect:

The location of the majority of Black Pentecostal groups is between the denomination and established sect on the conceptual continuum. Perhaps the major exception is the Church of God in Christ. It very closely approximates the typical denomination. When it is observed that this body has gone further than the others on such matters as formalized procedures of admission, rarely ever expelling members, the seeking of respectability, general acceptance of the values of the culture/sub-culture, less ethical rigorism, providing for a trained professional ministry (especially as seen in their entry into gradate religious education), emphasizing education of their younger generation, and other typically denominational activities, the characterization as a denomination seems appropriate.¹⁶⁰

Black Pentecostal groups have increasingly taken on the characteristics of denominations in several categories. Shopshire noted that collectively, black

¹⁶⁰ Shopshire, 139.

Pentecostal groups have increased in size and appeal and that their internal structures have moved toward more democratic models of governance:

The tendency toward strong authority and control of the religious organizations of Black Pentecostals by senior bishops and general overseers is giving way to more democratic systems of government. Boards of Bishops are most common at present in decision-making that affects national organizations. Much of their activity must be reported and accounted for in annual, bi-annual, or quadrennial convocations. National boards of education, missions, Sunday schools, publications, pensions, and other categories of functional operation can now be found among the various organized groups.¹⁶¹

These changes are clearly observable in COGIC. To reiterate the discussion in the previous chapter, COGIC's governance style changed dramatically after the death of its founder in 1961. New governance models were often accompanied by new emphasis on image. Shopshire noticed:

Associated with this trend is what can be termed a new imaginal breakthrough, giving rise to new attitudes and symbols. New and larger edifices have been constructed in recent years with an emphasis on style and stained-glass beauty. The “mother church” or headquarter buildings are usually lavished with great size and attention. In the 1940s and 1950s the diocesan or district centers began to receive the same kind of beautification and maintenance. The 1960s and 1970s have witnessed the widespread efforts to construct attractive

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

multifunctional buildings or the purchase and renovation of existing structures to conventional church-like appearances.¹⁶²

No longer satisfied with their image as Holy Rollers, Pentecostals have altered their image to fit more mainstream guidelines. COGIC churches eventually joined the trend of investing in larger, more elaborate church structures, as church buildings became symbols of their growing status.

Examining black Pentecostal groups' theological and ethical rigor, Shopshire claimed that over time, black Pentecostals relaxed their prohibitions. Practices once central to early Pentecostal identity, such as constant prayer and fasting, are now fading away. Historian Sholanda Dexter studied the impact of migration to the North on Holiness-Pentecostal practices in her dissertation. Dexter interviewed COGIC members who had moved from Lexington, Mississippi to Chicago, Illinois. At first the COGIC migrants who settled in Chicago maintained the strict codes of living dictated by their former congregation in Lexington. But eventually, religious requirements at St. Paul COGIC in Chicago were relaxed. Dexter claims that migrants' interactions with the secular culture of Chicago influenced these changes. COGIC members who settled in Chicago benefited from a better educational system and better job opportunities, creating a new black middle class whose habits of religious practice reflected their new standard of living:

¹⁶² Ibid.

Urban black Pentecostal women began to challenge this restrictive, sexist dress code during the 1960s. As Black Pentecostalism has become more mainstreamed and respectable, the traditional dress codes have been challenged and in some cases eradicated. Though Black Pentecostals still define themselves as separated from the world, clothing is no longer the primary means of reflecting this belief. Though women are still encouraged to dress modestly, modesty no longer means what it did fifty years ago. Many Black Pentecostals are now middle class and thus have greater access to more modern fashions. Restrictions in regards to pants wearing and make-up are no longer enforced so rigidly.¹⁶³

Changes in COGIC standards sometimes caused divisions within the COGIC ranks. For some, strict standards of living were essential to Pentecostals' religious identity. Dexter notes that Chicago Bishop Ford's lack of enforcement of some Pentecostal prohibitions caused some to question his religious standing:

Ford was seen playing golf with political friends and encouraged his members to participate in sports. Ford also did not prohibit his female members from wearing make-up or pants. Ford's stance on these issues led some of his colleagues to question whether Ford was really saved.¹⁶⁴

Other markers of change, according to Shopshire, were black Pentecostals' increasing social and political awareness, their growing black consciousness, and their participation in inter-organizational black Pentecostal associations. In

¹⁶³ Shalanda Denise Dexter, "Sojourners in a Strange Land: The Impact of Northern Urbanization on Black Pentecostal Identity and Culture in Chicago from 1940 to 1980" (Princeton 2001).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

COGIC's case, association with the Interdenominational Theological Center was sign of assimilation into black church mainstream culture and of increased involvement in national black church politics.

Finally, Shopshire calls attention to black Pentecostals' growing interest in education. The far-reaching scope of the church's endeavors in this arena is evidenced by numerous articles in *The Whole Truth* from 1970 to 2000. From programming at national conferences, to scholarship fundraisers for young Pentecostal college students, COGIC members on the local and national levels proudly supported students' academic aspirations.

Recognizing that students would need to survive in non-Pentecostal educational environments, COGIC officials tried to equip young people with the tools to "live right," providing both spiritual and financial support. The feature article in the August 1980 edition of *The Whole Truth* concerned a United National Auxiliaries Convention (UNAC) session on the challenges facing Pentecostal students amid the temptations of college life. Charles Hawthorne reported that the session, which brought together COGIC youth from around the country, began with an altar call in which "a backslider expressed a desire to be saved again"; afterwards, session participants "gathered around this young brother as he gave his life back to the Lord." Hawthorne reported that the following issues plagued Pentecostal students:

- 1) relating to non-Pentecostal students
- 2) addressing issues (i.e., racism, prejudice, discrimination) through student unions
- 3) playing inter-varsity sports
- 4) being away from home and the influences of parents and church
- 5) handling intellectual questions posed by professors, teachers, and unbelieving classmates, being exposed to immorality (i.e., premarital sex, drugs), and finding a church or Christian organization while on campus.¹⁶⁵

Students discussed coping strategies at the meeting, which included finding biblically based solutions for their problems.

Support for students attending secular schools was also manifested through COGIC scholarships. National awards, such as the J. O. Patterson Fine Arts Scholarship, rewarded youth who displayed great talent in the arts. Regional scholarship dinners supported local students throughout the college years.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, annual spelling bees and Bible bowls at UNAC meetings encouraged literacy and gave young people a national platform to display their mastery of a subject or set of skills.

¹⁶⁵ Charles E. Hawthorne, "Problems of Pentecostal Students on Campus," *The Whole Truth*, August 1980.

¹⁶⁶ "Mississippi Southern Encourages Excellence Thru \$97,000 in Scholarships", *The Whole Truth* February-March 1997, 17.

Announcements of individuals' post-college accomplishments were also regularly featured. Headlines such as "Jacqueline Wheelock Receives Second M.A. Degree," "Rose Kelly Patterson Receives Degree," and "Vernard Johnson Awarded Doctorate" regularly appeared in *The Whole Truth*.¹⁶⁷ Scholarships such as the Deborah Mason Patterson Scholarship, administered by the Bishop Wives Circle and awarded at the Women's International Convention, were created to assist women pursuing graduate education.

Several articles in *The Whole Truth* were devoted to discussing public schools. Like many Evangelicals, most COGIC members saw the elimination of prayer from the public schools in 1962 as a sign that the nation was moving away from its Christian roots. In the COGIC newspapers, opinions about how to respond to an increasingly secularized public school system were mixed. One author argued for greater parental participation in spiritual development, while others believed that building Christian-based schools was the answer. The pastor of Grace Temple COGIC proposed starting a private religious high school, but clarified that his proposal was meant to complement the existing public school system, not work against it.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ "Jacqueline Wheelock Receives Second M.A. Degree," *The Whole Truth* June 1980; "Rose Kelly Patterson Receives Degree," *The Whole Truth* July 1989; "Vernard Jordan Awarded Doctorate", *The Whole Truth* June 1979.

¹⁶⁸ "Grace Temple Church to Open Christian School in September," *The Whole Truth* August 1980.

COGIC members' attitudes concerning public education, as expressed in the pages of *The Whole Truth*, seem to fit neatly under the umbrella of typical Evangelical attitudes toward education profiled by Christian Smith. In *Christian America? What Evangelicals Want*, Smith argues that Evangelicals' responses to public education have been misunderstood. Rebutting scholars who have pegged Evangelicals as interested in a Christian takeover of public schools, Smith insists that the large majority of Evangelicals are not interested in abandoning public schools. Rather, he maintains, their adoption of "engaged orthodoxy" necessitates individual responses to perceived moral decay, through prayer for example, rather than through institutional change. Smith concludes,

Evangelicals in fact are not focused on transforming public schools in their own image. Rather, evangelical traditions are reconstructed in a way that calls for active involvement, a continuing "moral presence," but ultimately little fundamental change.¹⁶⁹

The articles in *The Whole Truth* pertaining to public schools uphold this commitment to working within existing structures. Opinions such as those expressed in the article "Public Schools No Longer Safe for Christian Youth" are largely outweighed by entries with a more cooperative tone. Indeed, consistent with Christian Smith's model of engagement, COGIC members generally accepted the divide between the secular and the sacred reinforced in public

¹⁶⁹ Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2000), 159.

schools, relying on their churches and families to communicate moral and religious values to the next generation.

COGIC articles also reveal the suspicion that existing educational structures fail to address the concerns of black students. In the June 1979 issue, Dr. Chas Smith, Jr. argued that the deteriorating quality of public schools had negative consequences for black students. Eroding standards of achievement made the need for academic and spiritual role models for black students all the more pressing. According to Smith, black students were most often victims of uninspired teachers who cared little for their success:

We cannot afford to tolerate teachers, in the ghetto or wherever, who by mere rhetoric lull and deceive our students into believing that the precise use of the English language, the writing of unified and coherent paragraphs, and correct spelling of words, the reading and analysis of the works of Shakespeare or Chaucer or the Greek playwrights, the mastery of basic skills in mathematics, the skill in test-taking—essay tests included—in a nation where entrance into almost any line of endeavor depends on test scores, are irrelevant. . . . We need to impress upon our black students, in particular, that the times call for brains—not sluggish, lazy minds.¹⁷⁰

Chas Smith's sentiments demonstrate that the black Pentecostal strategy of "engaged orthodoxy" was tempered by an awareness of the unique challenges faced by black students.

¹⁷⁰ Chas Smith Jr., "Show Thyself Approved," *The Whole Truth* June 1979.

Finally, the establishment of the C. H. Mason System of Bible Colleges and the C. H. Mason Seminary in the 1970s was a sign of COGIC's growing investment in education. The seminary became part of the Interdenominational Theological Center, which is home to five other seminaries sponsored by the National Baptist Convention, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Though Mason Seminary's enrollment was small (in 1974 only 26 students were enrolled), its establishment signified a concern for institutionalized, formal training of clergy, and thus improved COGIC's standing with regards to more mainstream black Protestant denomination.

COGIC's latest educational venture is All Saints Bible College. In 2002, the late Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, then presiding bishop of COGIC, established the school in Memphis, Tennessee. The name of the school was meant to pay homage to the vision of ASU conceived by G. E. Patterson's uncle, J. O. Patterson, discussed in chapter three. Today, the school has about 150 students. Administrators intend to gain full accreditation for college so that students may receive federal loans to attend. In the fall of 2006, All Saints' president, Dr. Perry Little, announced that the school had acquired a library that will help it become accredited with the American Association of Bible Schools.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ See the All Saints Bible College website:
http://www.allsaintsonline.info/about_history.html

Saints Contributions in light of COGIC's sect-church transformation

Saints contributions must be examined against the backdrop of COGIC's development as a religious group. First, during COGIC's most isolated phase, Saints' presence and reputation demonstrated to outsiders that COGIC was a "respectable" religious group. Contrary to COGIC's image as academically naïve and undisciplined, its school was a model of structured learning. Dr. Mallory helped the school to gain fame beyond Lexington. Due largely to her efforts, COGIC likely gained admiration from many nonmembers, who appreciated the denomination's investment in a disciplined and serious educational infrastructure. Saints' model of respectability ultimately reflected on COGIC. Secondly, in providing training for future clergy and laity, Saints provided a path to social mobility within COGIC. Before COGIC had its own seminary and before Pentecostal Christians were welcomed into mainstream seminaries, Saints supplied COGIC with steady stream of clergy. The ambassadorial initiative and strong denominational loyalty of these graduates that would be key ingredients in COGIC's explosive growth in recent decades.

Finally, Saints has served as a reminder to COGIC members of their connection to their rich past and to the rituals and practices that sustained their founders. The way of life epitomized by Charles Mason has rapidly diminished in the twentieth century. Tarrying, fasting, foot-washing, and other religious practices that were central to the lives of COGIC members during Mason's era have become remnants of a nostalgic past. At Saints however, students were taught how to perform these distinctly Pentecostal practices. While the

denomination at large was drifting farther and farther away from its core religious practices, Saints graduates were dispatched to carry these sacred rituals forward.

The Resurrection of Saints

The Saints campus would remain dormant for ten years before a new administration with a new vision breathed life into the campus. J. O. Patterson died in 1990, leaving a vacancy in the office of the Presiding Bishop. Mississippi native Louis Henry Ford beat his competitors in an election that was uneventful compared to the rocky transition Patterson had endured. Ford's platform was about reclaiming the past. After decades of increasing wealth but declining strictness in religious observance among the COGIC laity, Ford promised to return COGIC to its roots. "People have it in their minds that I am carrying you back," he remarked at the Holy Convocation in 1990, "but any Church that cannot remember its founders and its roots, is not worthy."¹⁷² Ford extolled the benefits of the education he had received as a student at Saints under the tutelage of Dr. Mallory. He spoke fondly of his formative years in Mississippi and credited the school with preparing him for future leadership in the denomination. Ford would become one of the staunchest advocates for the expansion of COGIC's educational initiatives. Morehouse College president Robert Franklin grew up in

¹⁷² "83rd Convocation a Rediscovering!" *The Whole Truth*, November/December 1990.

the church where Ford had served as pastor in Chicago and recalls the leader's commitment to education:

Although we were part of a Pentecostal tradition that did not think very highly of formal education, I was fortunate to have a pastor who supported academic excellence and a family that rewarded performance. I recall visiting preachers who would declare that studying was a waste of time for people who knew the Lord and could read the Bible. Depending on the age and status of the preacher, Pastor Ford would either keep silent or refute the remarks. One day after a preacher had held forth on how he had never gone to school beyond fifth grade yet had been successful as a pastor, Pastor Ford simply asked the congregation whether they would seek a trained physician or any well-intentioned Christian if they needed brain surgery.¹⁷³

Ford was forthright in his desire to re-engage COGIC's past. To this end, he made Lexington one of the major focuses of his administration. The Chicago bishop wanted to reopen Saints Academy and Junior College at all costs. Like his predecessor, Ford embarked on a massive campaign to persuade the laity and leadership that reinvesting in Lexington was a worthy cause, exhorting them to raise the millions it would take to make the school operational again.

Ford's fundraising campaign was aggressive, but short-lived in comparison to the decade-long effort to raise money for ASU. In 1990, Ford announced his intentions to refurbish Saints in 1990; a year later, he led a delegation of COGIC members to Lexington to tour the site. Only months thereafter, he hosted the

¹⁷³ Robert Franklin, *Another Day's Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 6.

groundbreaking ceremony for the Deborah Mason Patterson building. The president of nearby Alcorn State University celebrated the event by pledging his support and resources to help return it to its former glory.¹⁷⁴ Only three years after Ford took office, the school admitted its first class in just over a decade. The rapid progression of the building project and truncated fundraising run were thanks largely to the decision of the Saints Center Board of Directors to use remaining funds from the failed Saints Center effort for the Saints campus's newest structure. Also crucial were the efforts of scores of volunteers from COGIC's Nehemiah Builders and the labor of Lexington residents (some of them Saints graduates). The resurrection of Saints poured millions of dollars into the dying Lexington economy.

Saints' enrollment of one hundred sixty-five students (including five high school seniors)¹⁷⁵ in October 1993 was celebrated in typical COGIC fashion with worship services. Ford's pride in the new Deborah Mason Patterson building and the newly renovated campus was best expressed in his statement to the Chicago Tribune: "Yale is going to look like a cow pen compared to this."

But money and new buildings alone would not make the school viable. Ironically, while the Deborah Mason Patterson building served the religious life of the school well, it was not well-equipped for academic purposes. With a massive sanctuary, state-of-the-art kitchens, and hotel rooms, the building looked more

¹⁷⁴ "The Ground Is Broken," *The Whole Truth* September 1991 4.

¹⁷⁵ "A Day at Saints," *The Whole Truth*, October 1993.

like a church than an academic facility designed to support students' intellectual development. The hall reflected Ford's naiveté regarding educational infrastructure.

Ford also underestimated the resources it would take to retain the students he had worked so hard to recruit. A large part of the school's failings were due to lack of planning. For example, against his advisors' wishes, Ford immediately opened the school to students from K-12, instead of gradually expanding the number of available grades. As a "second chance" school, Saints took in students from all over the country, regardless of their behavioral or academic challenges. Although Saints' teachers were well trained—some were retired teachers and others worked in the public schools by day and at Saints at night—they were often unprepared to deal with the diverse student body, which included many students who had fared poorly in mainstream schools.

The problems with the new Saints Academy went beyond planning and infrastructure: challenges to its new leadership and difficulties with its "second chance" mission threatened to close Saints' doors once again. Ford selected Goldie Wells, a North Carolina native and third-generation COGIC woman, to lead Saints Academy. Wells had served the church enthusiastically for much of her life. In fact, she had been inspired by church leaders to earn a doctorate in educational administration for the purpose of teaching at All Saints University. Wells had the training and the intellectual capacity to operate Saints, but local COGIC clergy who objected to "outside" leadership often undermined her guidance. The obstacles that Wells faced were similar to those that Mallory

confronted during her tenure as president. Wells recalls opposition from some who preferred the position to be occupied by a Mississippian. And, like Mallory, she depended on the support of the presiding bishop to win allies and to effectively guide the school.¹⁷⁶

Louis Henry Ford died on March 31, 1995, and with him died the attention to Lexington. Wells' appointment as president was not upheld by the next administration. From 1996 to 2007, leadership at Saints would change hands repeatedly. The elections of Chandler David Owens and Gilbert Earl Patterson yet again imposed new visions on Saints' role in the COGIC educational system. In 2007, Saints shut its doors with little fanfare. Some still do not know that the school has closed.

The experiences of Nicholas Randle, Class of 1996, highlight what has been consistent about Saints' role in COGIC: its role in religious education and its preservation of past religious traditions. Nicholas was the youngest of all of the people I interviewed. We met under unusual circumstances: on classmates.com. Part of the inaugural group of students who went to Saints after it reopened in 1993, Randle hailed from the small town of Krueger, Mississippi. Randle grew up attending COGIC National Convocations and going to Founder's Week events in Lexington, where he learned about COGIC Bishop Louis Henry Ford's grand plan to reopen the college in 1993.¹⁷⁷ Randle petitioned his mother

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Goldie Wells, July 2006, Houston, Texas

¹⁷⁷ "Cogic Leaders Demonstrate Loyalty in Lexington: Founders Week Is Enormous Success," *The Whole Truth* The Heritage Issue--October 1994.

to transfer him from a Catholic school to the newly minted Saints Academy. A few days before the school year was to start, Randle's mother granted his wish. Randle recalls that the new academy got off to a rough start. Although it had well-meaning teachers and an ambitious academic program, there were many glitches to iron out. Randle described the curriculum as less than challenging. Basic courses in algebra, English, and choir were available, but the lack of planning greatly undermined their rigor. There were a few exceptions—Randle developed a love of biology, a subject he struggled with, thanks to the ingenuity of his biology teacher, Horace Glover, who also taught Sunday school. A member of a nearby Missionary Baptist Church, Glover made a lasting impact on Randle. Randle cherished the time he spent in chapel. The required Friday morning chapel services could last from forty-five minutes to two, hours depending on “how the spirit moved” that day. Services included all the elements of typical Pentecostal worship. The Saints choir provided the music for the gatherings, where it was not uncommon to see “the gifts of the spirit in operation.” Sometimes former students (many of whom had become preachers) were invited back to give a sermon.

The campus retained many of the practices of the past. In addition to required chapel and Bible study, everyone was required to go to church on Sunday. Because Randle commuted to school, he remained a member of his home church. Stories of Saints' glorious past were passed down to students. Dr. Mallory's temperament and Mason's engagement with Saints and the town of Lexington were the most popular topics of such oral history.

Randle left Saints to pursue a college degree at historic Alcorn State University in Mississippi. He found himself unprepared for the rigors of a college curriculum, and admitted that the lack of a challenging course of study at Saints was in part to blame. Nevertheless Randle celebrated his unique high school experience:

I just loved the school, seriously. I loved it. It was a great. . . . You know, some people go to high school to get an education and then enjoy it; they love the atmosphere. But for the most part I got more than what I would call an “education.” Saints Academy was actually the place that I really, really began to understand how God works. And so I think that that experience was way more precious than any other experience I would have gotten.

Randle’s testimony lifts up Saints’ role in preserving the way of the life that made COGIC so distinctive a century ago. Students from nearly every period in Saints’ history point to the formation of young people’s habits of religious practice as the school’s most important role.

Johnson’s caution is to be heeded here. COGIC has not simply been overtaken by the values of its social environment. COGIC has not abandoned all of their “sect-like” ways. For example, on issues like gay rights, for example, where the perception is that the majority of Americans would support the sanctioning, COGIC has been steadfast in its opposition. COGIC officials communicated their disagreement with gay marriage and participated in the political process to express their concerns. One could argue that mainstream

American opinion leans toward opposition to gay marriage in large part because of the influence of conservative American Evangelical groups, thus giving credence to Johnson's point that religious groups' values can influence society.

Distinctively Pentecostal religious practices may not be employed as vigorously as they once were but they have certainly not been abandoned. The congregations that make up COGIC represent a range of organizational types with various levels of theological and ethical rigor. Storefronts that strictly enforce a traditional "Holiness dress code" to megachurches where women can attend worship services in pants, COGIC congregations support a range of Pentecostal beliefs and practices.

As COGIC marches towards even greater numerical success and continues to gain social currency in American religious life, the absence of a place like Saints will have repercussions on the denomination's future. If COGIC simply discards those "peculiar" elements of its sectarian past, it runs the risk of taking on the characteristics of mainstream churches that it once critiqued.

CONCLUSIONS

An Appraisal of the Saints Model

There is much that contemporary black Pentecostal churches eager to build educational institutions can learn from the Saints model. First, black Pentecostals must realize that they have a legacy of community uplift through education. Founded in a time and place where educational opportunities for African Americans were severely limited, the Lexington community embraced Saints because it was one of the few institutions operated by African-Americans for African-American youth. I have argued that members of COGIC who were instrumental in Saints' founding and maintenance opened Saints in hopes of improving the material and spiritual welfare of Lexington, Mississippi, residents. The decision to host the school came out of their recognition of the dismal conditions facing African-Americans. It was a response to vicious racism in Mississippi.

Second, strategic alliances were critical to Saints' success. The school was connected to a network of black educational institutions that were also concerned with improving the lives of black students. From borrowing fundraising techniques (e.g., touring choirs) to adding a junior college division, Saints followed patterns established by existing black schools. Saints' president, Dr. Arenia Mallory, deepened the connections to this network by building relationships with leaders of other schools and colleges. The strongest of these

relationships was with Mary McLeod Bethune, who ran her own college in Daytona Beach, Florida. Because the network of white Pentecostal schools was underdeveloped, decentralized, and exclusive, Saints relied on network of institutions already established in the black community.

I have suggested that Saints had much more in common with educational institutions built by black Protestants and other black educational entrepreneurs than with institutions built by white Pentecostals. A shared concern for the dismal racial reality likely prompted this cooperation. While the COGIC Christians who founded Saints may have been equally as disillusioned with the secularized liberal trends in American education as their white Pentecostal counterparts, they built social alliances and theological bridges with black Protestants instead to share the heavy burden of struggling against the oppression of a racist society. A kindred concern for the educational plight of African-Americans united these groups of black Americans across denominational lines. In its earliest years, Saints catered mainly to the children of COGIC members, but, by the middle of the century, it had a student body with representation from Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic churches. As Saints' reputation grew, non-COGIC parents sent their children there to receive the best possible education for their offspring, despite the potential theological conflicts.

Third, the obstacles Saints faced were determined in part by its socio-historical context. Many of the challenges Saints faced were common among black schools of its era. Founded near the turn of the century, Saints had not been supported by consistent and sustained relationships with Northern white

philanthropists, as institutions from an earlier wave of schools had. Resources for black educational entrepreneurship were significantly declining in the Progressive Era. Competition for funds was fierce, and black schools often competed against each other for benefactors. Furthermore, key education legislation that sought to expand opportunities for black children had a tremendous impact on predominantly black institutions of all sorts. The *Brown v. Board of Education* Ruling of 1954 and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 increased opportunities for African-Americans, but led to decreased enrollment at black schools.

Finally, much of the labor to build Saints was gendered. Arenia Mallory faced gender-based opposition from within COGIC. To accomplish what needed to be done for the school, Mallory fostered deep and lasting connections to gendered networks inside and outside of COGIC. It was these networks that sustained the school. While the unconditional support of strategic male allies like COGIC founder Charles Mason was critical, Saints, like the COGIC National Church, survived because of the tireless efforts of women. Borrowing a phrase from sociologist Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, there would have been no Saints “if it wasn’t for the women.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women": Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture*(Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001).

Directions for Further Research

I am hopeful that this study will prompt comparative studies of black and white Pentecostal schools and colleges. Comparisons can readily be made between COGIC and the Assemblies of God, a historic white Pentecostal denomination. The most striking difference is the sheer size of their educational networks. The Assemblies of God (AOG), half COGICs size, maintains twenty schools that include Trinity Bible College, Northwest University, Evangel University, and Native American Bible College. On the other hand, as has been discussed throughout this project, COGIC, the fifth largest religious body in the United States, has a much smaller network of educational institutions. It maintains the C. H. Mason System of Bible Colleges and one accredited seminary.¹⁷⁹ What factors shaped the evolution of schools in the AOG network, and how do they compare with those that shaped COGIC's? Comparative research might further explore the impact of race on the structure and mission of Pentecostal schools in general. Do black Pentecostals place greater emphasis on social justice issues? What are the reasons for white Pentecostal schools' success and failure, and how do they compare with the reasons for black Pentecostal schools' success and failure? What is the relationship between white Pentecostal schools and white Evangelical schools?

¹⁷⁹ The title of Bible Colleges is misleading because the training doesn't have all of the elements of a Bible college in the historic sense. See <http://colleges.ag.org/> for a complete list of AOG schools.

In addition to stimulating comparative studies of black and white Pentecostal schools, this study invites deeper inquiry into Pentecostal intellectual life. Pentecostal intellectualism has been misunderstood and understudied. Pentecostals have been thoughtful, and their intellectual development has been steady. Howard University Professor, James Tinney dedicated his life to organizing this neglected sector of the church. The goal of Howard University professor James Tinney's *Spirit* journal was to bring together black Pentecostal intellectuals, a group he believed to be grossly neglected in Pentecostal congregations. The composition of the first editorial board of *Spirit* provides some clues about the educational paths of black Pentecostal intellectuals.

Tinney lamented "While our churches often pretend to have a ministry to the 'whole man', the concept extends only to the spiritual and physical man. We make much of 'salvation' and 'healing' but we say little about the intellectual man and his mind."¹⁸⁰ Tinney charged Pentecostal churches with fostering "anti-scholasticism" but speculated that such was the case because black Pentecostals often turned their attention to the "social outcasts of both the more formal churches and the dominant society." Tinney saw the advent of his journal as an opportunity to bring together a neglected segment of the church:

¹⁸⁰ James Tinney, "Editorial," *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism* 1, no. 1 (1977): 9.¹⁸⁰ *Spirit*, Editorial, 9.

The appearance of this journal marks just such an event. The coming-of-age, of course, began long before this project was even conceived. But the publication will publicize that evolution. Already there are thousands of Black Pentecostal professionals with advanced degrees in higher education—many of them signal contributors to their respective fields of studies. This journal intends to serve their needs.¹⁸¹

Tinney recruited promising black Pentecostal professionals who had ties to the church and the academy to serve on the editorial board. James Forbes, Jr. earned a Bachelor of Arts from Howard University in Chemistry in 1957. He would go on to Union Theological Seminary for his Master of Divinity and earn a Doctor of Ministry from Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Pearl Williams Jones served as Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of the District of Columbia. Her father, Smallwood Williams, founded the predominantly black Apostolic group, BibleWay Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Bennie Goodwin was Assistant Professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, GA. Goodwin published extensively on Christian education and was a lifelong member of the COGIC. Additionally, Tinney recruited doctoral candidates, a Pentecostal chaplain, a medical doctor, and an attorney. Cheryl Sanders has also shown evidence of black Pentecostal interest in scholasticism and intellectualism as early as the 1970s. Writing about Black

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 10.

gospel choirs, Sanders argues that they served as important outlets for black Pentecostal students:

Despite the movement's alleged anti-intellectual biases and appeal to "ignorant" and uneducated blacks, the Sanctified Church has traditionally encouraged its saints in higher education to acquire "the learning without losing the burning." The gospel choirs have reinforced this exhortation in the minds of Holiness-Pentecostal students in pursuit of "the learning" while offering other students an initial exposure to black religious fervor, that is, the burning. These choirs have provided a context for black students to give voice and rhythm to their exilic consciousness in the campus setting by singing the Lord's song in a strange land of intellectual, social, cultural and religious alienation.¹⁸²

I do not mean to suggest that Pentecostals are devoid of anti-intellectual tendencies. There have been and continue to be some Pentecostal communities that are less than supportive of education and intellectual life. In James Baldwin's celebrated novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, set in the 1960s, the main character (based on Baldwin himself) laments his father's dismissal of his educational achievements. This depiction may have colored readers' perceptions of Pentecostalism as anti-intellectual. Like most stereotypes, this one is grounded in some truth. But it is also true that many Pentecostals developed varied, complicated, and creative responses to education and intellectual life about which few are aware. As this study has shown, Pentecostalism has attracted persons at

¹⁸² Sanders, 98.

all points on the educational spectrum, and this complexity has yet to be acknowledged and probed.

More attention might be given to the growing class of Pentecostal intellectuals. The Society for Pentecostal Studies has long served as a forum for Pentecostal intellectual dialogue, but the existence of new groups like the COGIC Scholars Fellowship points to increasing diversity and interest in formal education and intellectual exchange among Pentecostals. The mission of the COGIC Scholars Fellowship, organized in 2001, is stated as follows:

The COGIC Scholars Fellowship is a supportive network that seeks to provide an intellectually stimulating forum for dialogue within the denomination for COGIC members who have obtained, or are presently pursuing, graduate level degrees in religious/theological studies or other related academic disciplines. In achieving this goal, the COGIC Scholars Fellowship seeks to stimulate academic scholarship among COGIC members; to encourage the pursuit of academic training for ministry and scholarship; to recognize and promote scholarly achievements of COGIC members especially in the area of published works; to connect COGIC members with the on-going scholarship of the Academy and the wider Pentecostal Movement in particular; and to provide opportunities for mentoring to other COGIC members who are contemplating pursuing graduate level training in religious/theological studies or other related academic disciplines.

The Fellowship circulates a quarterly publication called *The Advocate* to promote books and interdisciplinary academic articles by members of the group. The group meetings provide a safe space for up-and-coming as well as established

academics to challenge (at least on paper) denominational policies such as those regarding the ordination of women. One important function of the group is to engage scholars inside and outside of COGIC to share their work. For example, at the COGIC National Convocation in Memphis in November, 2006, Dr. Anthea Butler, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Rochester, encouraged attendants at the Educational Luncheon to critically engage their denomination's history. In another session, a Duke-trained New Testament scholar led a session on rebutting *The Da Vinci Code*.

Perhaps one of the most important functions of the COGIC scholars' meetings is to feature new voices in Pentecostal scholarship. The group regularly provides graduate students with opportunities and the resources to pursue research topics related to COGIC and the Pentecostal movement at large. In its eight years of existence, the fellowship has nurtured the intellectual curiosities of an elite group of Pentecostal intellectuals whose works span the areas of philosophy and biblical studies. Many members of the group are already active in mainstream scholarly organizations like the American Academy of Religion (AAR). The majority of COGIC scholars were not educated at COGIC institutions; instead, they have received advanced degrees from non-Pentecostal schools. An increased presence of these voices in more established groups like the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature would likely spark interest in the contributions of Pentecostal intellectuals.

The lack of attention to Pentecostal intellectual life has been exacerbated by the lack of black Pentecostal institutions of higher education. Pentecostal

historian David Daniels has briefly discussed the negative consequences of the lack of black Pentecostal institutions:

These institutions serve as major employers of white Pentecostal educators, creating a class of Pentecostal theologians and other intellectuals as well as educating generations of Pentecostals. . . . While a small number of black and Hispanic Pentecostal scholars within predominantly white Pentecostal denominations are able to access the institutional networks of white Pentecostalism, the majority of black and Pentecostal scholars, for instance, who are outside these denominations are forced to seek faculty positions in non-Pentecostal educational institutions.¹⁸³

With an institutional home, a place where black Pentecostal intellectuals can flourish, their contributions could make even more of an impact and, on a practical level, provide employment opportunities for black Pentecostal intellectuals.

Social Location

One of the things I remember most about growing up Pentecostal in the 1980's and 1990's was the caution I had heard from time to time to get my "Learnin'" without losing my "Burnin'". Visiting preachers would often render this warning from the pulpit and as an academically motivated student I took notice. Though no one had explained exactly what the burning was, I had a sense

¹⁸³ David Daniels, "'Everybody Bids You Welcome': A Multicultural Approach to North American Pentecostalism," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Irvine: Regnum Books Intl, 1999), 237.

of what they meant. The Burning was intricately tied to salvation. A person could not be “saved” until they were baptized “In the Name of Jesus” and had received the “gift of the Holy Ghost” evidenced by speaking in tongues. One got the Holy Ghost by simply asking God for it or more commonly, diligently “tarrying” or waiting for it on the altar (Acts 2:38). Getting the Holy Ghost was like having a flame ignited inside of the soul. It empowered a person to walk and talk differently and to move through the world with a new spiritual lens. The Holy Ghost lived inside of the saved and it was imperative that the converted protect this “fire” at all costs. The stakes were high. Jesus was coming back and no one could be “caught up” with him in the Rapture if they were not saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. In other words getting the “burning” was not a matter of spiritual enrichment: it was literally a matter of Eternal Life and Death.

School was an especially dangerous place for young people. In addition to the peer pressure to have sex, experiment with drugs and listen to “worldly” secular music, in these environments saved youth were exposed to ideas and teachings that may have been contrary to the Word of God. A subject like math was pretty safe but a subject like biology where the teacher insisted on the Big Bang theory as *the* explanation for the how the earth was created was threatening because it promoted ideas that were contradictory to our sacred guide, the Bible.

At the same time, my peers and I were instructed to take learning seriously. While suspicious of some ideas, my home church was very supportive of students’ academic pursuits. The Spirit encouraged excellence in *every* aspect of life. God wanted us to be good representatives in the world, good witnesses for the unsaved by striving to be at the top of the class, getting good grades and

pursuing the best schools as long as we used our knowledge for His glory. This meant that if we disagreed with a wayward biology teacher who preached the false doctrine of Darwinism that was no excuse not to get an “A” in the class.

To demonstrate their support for academic excellence every year the congregation hosted a graduation service where those moving to the next grade and those graduating received recognition. The speakers chosen, recent high school graduates or adults who had returned to the classroom, almost always testified about how their faith either motivated them to pursue a degree or helped them complete their academic programs. Almost always they attributed their success in passing a big test or understanding a complicated subject to prayer and the help from the “Holy Ghost”.

The caution to “Get the learnin’” without losing the “burnin’” was our church leaders’ way of encouraging the youth in the congregation to excel in school, to be exemplary students, to earn advanced degrees, to get our credentials and promotions on our jobs, and to climb as high on the socio-economic ladder as we could. But in our pursuit of the good life they did not want us to look down on the religious practices that nurtured us, or backslide by turning to “the world” for answers, or wake up and think that we were getting ahead without God’s help, or start believing that we were the architects of our success, or turn our backs on the church, or God forbid, lose our precious salvation.

This project has been about a school that one group of Pentecostals founded to ensure that their children would be grounded in these strong Pentecostal values. It has documented the many pitfalls and social factors working for and against them along the way. While the focus of the project is

Saints, unavoidably the project is also about the denomination that sustained it. This investigation has shed some light on how educational institutions under the care of religious groups transform as the religious organization moves along the sect-church continuum. I hope it will challenge characterizations of Pentecostal understandings of education. While it doesn't lay accusations of anti-intellectualism in Pentecostal communities to rest, I hope that it will forge new and dynamic conversations about the role of education in these growing communities.

Future Direction of COGIC Educational

It remains to be seen what will become of All Saints Bible College, COGIC's Memphis-based school and latest initiative. What turn the denomination will take next with respect to the school and how central it will become to COGIC will depend on its current presiding bishop and those who have his ear. According to All Saints' website, the current presiding bishop, Charles Blake, serves as Chancellor of the school. Also uncertain is the future of the old Saints campus in Lexington, Mississippi. Proposals for the campus—which include building a camp for young people to learn farm work and turning the campus into a retreat center—have been floating around since the 1980s.

While there has always been a critical mass of individuals within COGIC committed to uplift through education, the denomination as a collective entity has not been equally committed to the cause. Decisions at the national level have, at times, been made at the expense of educational advancement. Saints' successes

were driven by individuals within COGIC but not by COGIC as a body. One former administrator suspects that the organization has pursued educational initiatives for the wrong reasons:

Up until the present the real interest has not been there with regard to education. Primarily the emphasis and interest that has been there for education has been built on the ego of the church rather on the interest of the church. The corporate ego says that if you are an institution of substance you ought to have these kinds of things, these kinds of programs operative in the structure that provides a sense of legitimacy about who you are. [At] the most fundamental level, when you get past the corporate ego of the organization about what ought to be there for appearances of legitimacy, the deep-seeded interest in educational enterprises is just not there.

The observers contention that COGIC's preoccupation is with maintaining the appearance of support of education is an important one. Still, I am convinced that the quest to build Saints was not just about legitimacy. A genuine concern for the educational plight of black children has proved a driving force for some, if not all, of COGICs leaders and faithful. It remains so until this day.

What place will women occupy in the educational system of COGIC in the twenty-first century? COGIC must move toward the adoption of models of leadership that identify and promote women's contributions and their leadership aspirations. It is high time that women receive credit for their hand in educating a nation of COGIC youth, pastors, and future teachers. Further, women must be compensated for their work and given titles that reflect the work they do. All too often in COGIC, as one COGIC insider confided, despite a woman's credentials,

“They’ll make the ladies coordinators, they’ll make the men directors.” Without full recognition and freedom to use their education for the service of the church, many COGIC women may seek new denominational homes where their voices, gifts, and talents are appreciated.

Moving forward, whatever educational endeavor COGIC chooses to invest in for the future, it must draw on the talented men and women within the church—scholars and lay persons who have experience working in and for quality institutions—if it is to be successful. Wheelock’s caution is to be heeded. If the past is any indication, future COGIC educational efforts that fail to incorporate experienced voices or that do not prioritize institutional continuity will be doomed. The next COGIC school must be guided by individuals who have the denomination’s interests at heart and incorporate voices of people who have proven that they are committed to “getting the learnin’ without losing the burnin’.”

APPENDIX

Clarification of Methodology and Research Design

Participant Observation

I observed COGIC national meetings between Nov. 2006 and July 2008. While at the conferences I attended worship services and COGIC Scholars sessions to get a sense of the “COGIC culture”. What was the overall mood of the church concerning education? How did contemporary COGIC differ from the era in which Saints was founded? As a person reared in the Pentecostal tradition, I didn’t want to assume that the denomination’s practices would resemble anything I was familiar with. My participation in these meetings helped me become acquainted with the present and future leaders of the denomination. My recommendations for the future of the school and education in COGIC in general arise out of these observations.

Interviews

I located my interview subjects primarily via my connections with the students, faculty, and lay COGIC members who belong to the COGIC Scholars network and the Society for Pentecostal Studies. COGIC Scholars meets during COGIC’s national meetings and hosts academic forums where researchers inside and outside of the denomination can present their research. I became a member of COGIC Scholars and attended meetings in July 2006, Nov 2006, November 2007 and June 2008. The group’s leaders first informed current members of my study in November 2006 and introduced me to persons that thought had an

association with the school. Essentially they served as my internal COGIC informants.

In total I completed twelve interviews. From 2006-2008 the Institutional Review Board at Emory University supervised the study. In 2008 the IRB released the study from their review. Each interviewee answered the same set of core questions that were clustered under headings about their childhood, connection to COGIC, Saints daily life, Life in Lexington, and reflections on the value of their experience at Saints. For the administrators I added questions about their interactions with the national church. I opened each interview with open-ended questions about the interviewee's upbringing and connections to COGIC. Each was asked to describe the context in which they were introduced to COGIC and to Saints. What they had in common were their southern roots and their generational connections to COGIC.

Under the heading of Life in Lexington, I probed subjects about their memory of Lexington. How did the white Lexington community treat students who went to Saints? I was particularly interested in their observations about the racial climate. Did they experience any racism? Students' responses to this question were remarkably devoid of vivid tales of encounters with Mississippi racism that I had expected. This was surprising to me given Mississippi's place at the heart of America's struggle for racial progress and its reputation as arguably the South's most resistant region to integration.

In reflection I suppose are several plausible explanations for why racism did not show up prominently in students' recollections. All but one of the students I spoke with was from the Deep South. Most hailed from places like

Arkansas, Florida, and Mississippi. For them racial segregation was part of their daily lives. The awareness that all Mississippians did not embrace them may have been part of the context of their upbringing, not a defining feature of it. In parts of the deep American South like Lexington where blacks and whites were physically separated from each other, students may have had limited contact with white people. Students reported few interactions with people who disapproved of their presence. This may have been even more the case in Saints' earliest years when Saints was more isolated.

Another reasonable explanation for why racism did not become a prevailing theme is that it may have been that students' positive experiences at Saints (or at least their memory of them) overshadowed any negative experiences they had in the community at large.

It makes sense that students who matriculated in the later years spoke more fluidly about race. Over time as Saints opened up to the outside world students may have had more freedom to interact with those in the local community and thus had greater exposure to the racial politics of their environment. Jack Whitehead, a graduate of the early 1960's spoke most extensively about the racial climate during his time at Saints. Whitehead, a native of Detroit, was shocked by the racially-charged atmosphere in Mississippi. He felt he had to adjust his behavior so he would not invite trouble.

Interview Questionnaire

Childhood

1. Tell me a little more about you.
2. What would you tell a stranger who had never been to your hometown about the place where you grew up?
3. Tell me about your educational experiences. Did you go to high school? College? Graduate school?

Connection to COGIC

1. How long have you been associated with the Church of God in Christ?
2. Have you always been Pentecostal?
3. What attracted you or your family to COGIC?
4. What years did you attend/teach/work Saints?
5. What years did you attend Saints?
6. Are you still active in COGIC?
 1. If not, why did you leave?

Saints Daily Life

1. Tell me about how you first heard about Saints.
2. How was Saints like when you arrived? What do you remember most about your first days on the campus?

3. How was it different when you left?
4. Was there anything distinctly Pentecostal about the school?
5. Did you interact with other schools?
6. What were the classes like?
7. Did you feel like you got sound academic training?
8. Do you remember any of your teachers/students/colleagues? What were they like?
9. How much did it cost for you to go there?
10. Were there any class issues at Saints?
11. What role did religion play at the school?
12. What did you do for fun?
13. How did the high school students and the college students, interact, if at all?
14. Student life—examples of rules
15. Describe a typical day
16. Did you graduate from Saints?

Life in Lexington

1. How was Saints perceived by the Lexington community?
2. What other black schools were in the area?
3. Do you remember any criticism against the school?
4. Tell me about the racial climate in Lexington.

Reflections

1. Do you have any school memorabilia that you wish to share? Bulletins, catalogs, memos, news coverage, etc...?
2. What did you do when you graduated from Saints? (College? Work?)
3. Did you feel like you got sound academic training?
4. Do you maintain contact with your classmates?
5. Did you have contact with Dr. Mallory, the president of the school? Please describe.
6. What was the best thing about going to Saints?
7. What did you like the least?
8. Did you attend church in the area? How did the students transform the school?
9. How do you feel about the school's closing?

Relationships with the National Church/Saints Operations

1. What level of involvement if any, did the presiding bishop at the time (Bishop J.O. Patterson) have with the school?
2. How did Saints sustain itself financially? How involved, if at all, was the national church in supporting Saints?
3. What role, if any, did the Mississippi congregations in and outside of Lexington, play in supporting the school?
4. Do you recall COGIC national official visiting the Saints campus?
5. Were you paid would you would consider a fair wage for your work?

6. Did you have contact with Dr. Mallory, the president of the school? Please describe.
7. Could you speculate about the future of education in COGIC?

**Selected Timeline of Significant Events Impacting the
Rise, Development and Demise of
Saints Industrial and Literary School
(called Saints Junior College and Academy after 1954)**

- 1881: Booker T. Washington founds Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute
- Spelman College founded by Sophia B. Packard and Harriet Giles
- 1890: The Second Morrill Act is enacted. It provides for the “more complete endowment and support of the colleges” through the sale of public lands; Part of this funding leads to the creation of 16 historically black land-grant colleges. (www.cloudnet.com)
- 1893: C.H. Mason enrolls in Arkansas Baptist College but withdraws after only three months of instruction
- 1895: Church of God in Christ founded as a Holiness denomination
- 1903: Dubois publishes *Souls of Black Folk*
- Utica Institute founded
- 1904: Mary McLeod Bethune founds Bethune-Cookman College
- 1906: Azusa Street Revival begins in Los Angeles, California
- 1907: COGIC is reorganized as a Pentecostal denomination
- 1909: The NAACP is formed
- Piney Woods Country Life School is founded by Laurence Jones in Piney Woods, Mississippi

- 1910: The first issue of Crisis is published; the beginning of the Great Migration; Mississippi Normal College, now the University of Southern Mississippi, is organized
- 1917: Saints Industrial and Literary School established in Lexington, Mississippi
- 1918: WWI ends
Lee College is founded in Cleveland, Tennessee.
- 1919: “Red Summer”; 26 race riots between April and October
- 1925: The Scopes Monkey Trial puts Fundamentalists on the map.
- 1926: Arenia Mallory moves to Lexington, Mississippi to run Saints Normal and Industrial School
Carter G. Woodson establishes Negro History Week
- 1927: Arenia Mallory receives a B.A. from Simmons College in Louisville
- 1929: The Great Depression begins
- 1934: Mallory hosts the Alpha Kappa Alpha Mississippi Health Project
- 1936: Arenia Mallory featured on the cover of NAACP Crisis Magazine
- 1938: The Saints Jubilee Singers entertain President Roosevelt at the White House.
- 1939: World War II begins
- 1944: United Negro College Fund established
- 1941-1945: WWII promotes an industrial boom in Mississippi
- 1950: Arenia Mallory receives a Masters degree from the University of Illinois

- 1951: Arenia Mallory receives a honorary doctorate of law from Bethune Cookman College
- 1954: In the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education Ruling; the Supreme Court rules unanimously that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional
- Saints Junior College is dedicated.
- After an appearance on the popular television show, *This is your life*, Piney Woods founder, Laurence Jones, receives hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations for his school. The donations allow Jones to establish the school's endowment.
- 1955: Emmitt Till Murder; beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott
- 1955: Death of Mary McLeod Bethune
- 1961: Death of Bishop C.H. Mason
- Death of Charlotte Hawkins Brown
- 1962: James Meredith integrates the University of Mississippi. On the day that he enters the university US Marshalls escort him to class.
- In the case of Engel v. Vitale, the U. S. Supreme Court rules that the state of New York's Regents prayer violates the First Amendment. On a vote of six to one, the ruling specifies that "state officials may not compose an official state prayer and require that it be recited in the public schools of the State at the beginning of each school day. . ."
- O.T. Jones become Senior Bishop of COGIC
- 1963: The assassination of Medger Evers, NAAP Field Secretary
- 1964: Mississippi Freedom Summer

The Civil Rights Act becomes law. It prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

1968: Mallory becomes the 1st African American woman elected to the Holmes County Board of Education

J.O. Patterson is elected presiding bishop of COGIC

1970: C.H. Mason Seminary is founded in Atlanta, Georgia as part of the Interdenominational Theological Center

1972: O.T. Jones, Sr., Senior Bishop of COGIC from 1962-1964, dies.

J.O. Patterson is re-elected presiding bishop of COGIC.

1976: Saints Junior College closes and reopens as Saints Academy; Dr. Wheelock becomes president

J.O. Patterson is elected for his third term. He lobbies for the construction of Saints Center, a multi-million dollar project that includes the construction of new church headquarters and All Saints University (ASU) in downtown Memphis.

1977: Dr. Arenia Mallory dies.

1983: Saints closes its doors again

1984: J.O. Patterson is affirmed for a fourth term as presiding bishop.

1986: COGIC breaks ground for the construction of All Saints University.

1987: Some COGIC members complain about misuse of ASU-related funds when the school fails to open in the fall of 1987 as promised.

1988: J.O. Patterson is elected for a fifth term as presiding bishop.

- 1989:** J.O. Patterson dies.
- 1990:** Bishop Louis Henry Ford takes the reigns as presiding bishop of COGIC and launches the campaign to re-open Saints Academy and Junior College shortly thereafter.
- 1993:** Saints Academy reopens.
- Results from a landmark survey of African-American churches reveals COGIC is the nation's fastest growing and fifth largest denomination in the United States.
- 1994:** Dr. Goldie Wells appointed president of Saints. Wells serves until
1996
- 1995:** Bishop Louis Henry Ford dies.
- 2002:** All Saints Bible College is founded in Memphis, Tennessee
- 2008:** Bishop Charles E. Blake is elected presiding bishop of COGIC

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